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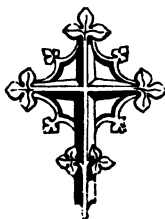




THE
CURATE OF HOLYCROSS.

A Tale.

"IT IS WRITTEN, THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD,
AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE."—S. MATTHEW IV. 10.



M. M. M.



LONDON:
JOSEPH MASTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET,
AND NEW BOND STREET.

MDCCLVII.

249. E. 318.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY JOSEPH MASTERS AND CO.,
ALERSGATE STREET.



INTRODUCTION.

SOME of my readers may, perhaps, regret that I should have employed a tale replete with worldly passions and foibles as a vehicle for setting forth a great religious principle : and I confess that at this moment, when my labour is finished, and I am able to look back on the hours which in their steady onward course have brought it to completion, I feel the experiment not to be wholly without objection. But just as this history more than once strives to show, that the human heart cannot be reached unless the senses be first attracted ; so I console myself for the objection that in the portrayal of individual characters, levity and even ridicule bear a large share, by the conviction that if such light means attract the reader to lay the great end to heart, I have not committed an unpardonable error in so writing.

The world is so familiar with the sin of idolatry, both in its old historical sense and in its application to society at the present day, in reference to its worship of money, its lusts, indulgence, ambition,

and so forth, that it would have been but the resuscitation of the Clergy's teaching for centuries past, to have attempted to urge its wickedness here. But there are two kinds of idolatry which exist in quite as strong a degree, and to which the attention of mankind is not always so forcibly drawn.

The first is, the idolatry of those blessings which are given to us as encouragements to the pursuit of virtue on earth, but which are, nevertheless, perishable,—those “good things” which “the FATHER of Lights” sends us to cheer and help us on in our onward paths, and which we make idols of, and worship instead of the Creator Who gives them.

The second is, the idolatry of our *fancies*, *ignorances*, and *prejudices* on religious matters. This idolatry is the more abominable, because it enslaves the judgment, sees sin in the most harmless religious exercises of our fellow men, and gives rise to a fashionable mental bigotry, which only lacks the times and the means, to be as dangerous in its consequences as was ever religious persecution in the days of Alva or of Mary.

The danger of both these kinds of idolatry, the following pages purport to set forth.

Feb. 1857.



THE CURATE OF HOLYCROSS.

CHAPTER I.

DRELLINGTON VICARAGE.

"WHAT *can* have become of your brother?" said the Vicar of Drellington to his daughter, Miss Mary Turnbull, aged twenty-two.

"Say rather, what can have become of *your* son," interposed Mrs. Turnbull, half cynically.

"Have you reason to know of any distinction in the two relationships?" replied her husband sarcastically.

"I have reason to consider you answerable for your son's education," said the lady majestically.

"To you alone is to be ascribed that breach of duty, which in common with our parishioners we have this morning witnessed."

"Let me hope that my reputation is not in such jeopardy."

"Oh! papa!" ejaculated Miss Fanny Turnbull, aged sixteen.

"Well! little one," said her parent, turning towards her, "we must be charitable in passing judgment. The fault of not attending service in

the church where his own father is minister cannot be defended. Still we must be charitable; it may be excused; who knows what may have detained him?"

"Who knows indeed?" said mamma, in an oracular tone.

"You must allow, papa, that it is too bad," said the elder daughter. "To be absent from us for so many years, and then the very first Sunday of his return to avoid the parish church, as if he had forgotten the nature of the day, and as if he had forgotten your profession too."

"Think what people will say!" suggested Miss Fanny.

"And the look of the thing!" continued Mary.

"And the sin!" said Miss Jane, aged twenty.

"And the disrespect to you!" said Mrs. Turnbull.

No doubt the Vicar gave due weight to these very valid reasons for a regular attendance in the sacred edifice. "The look of the thing," for instance, and the "dread of his neighbours' tongues" especially, were matters of serious moment in that excellent man's eyes; but the last remark of Mrs. Turnbull's unquestionably touched him much. "It was inconsiderate," he said in a quiet, comfortable, deprecatory tone. But the Vicar was an easy goer. He hated finding fault, a quality which he termed "judging charitably of the faults of others," that is to say, from sheer indolence of disposition, he would allow vices to go unreprieved, forgetting that while he was ascribing his forbearance to the divine virtue of charity, his Heavenly Master, in enjoining it to His followers, had left it on record that at proper seasons He could reprove as well.

"Nay, nay," he said after a pause. "Judge not the criminal behind his back. It was to say the least of it, inconsiderate, certainly inconsiderate;

but George is young and thoughtless, and his profession possesses many bad examples."

"Who made him a soldier?" said the oracular mistress of the household.

"Well, my dear, I did, if you wish me to confess it; that is, I gave my consent, which I might have withheld. But though the profession offers temptations to, and throws bad examples in the way of unprincipled youth, George has been well brought up. He has had the advantage of your care," (this was said deferentially,) "as well as mine, and in short, no doubt will set the matter right when he returns home."

The Vicar was getting tired of the business, and as he had just dined, (it was at the conclusion of the mid-day Sunday's dinner that this took place,) was perhaps anxious for his digestion, in relation to the rendering of the afternoon's service.

At this moment, the delinquent in question showed himself in the shrubbery which led up to the house. Further discussion therefore, with the old gentleman himself was unnecessary.

Now the reason of the dispute, a few sentences only of which have been noted down just to introduce the subject to the reader, was that George Turnbull, eight years before, had on the purchase of a commission by his father for him in an infantry regiment, when he was scarcely seventeen years of age, joined his regiment abroad, and since that period had never seen his parents or family for a day until the week preceding. This was the first Sunday after his return on leave. But most unaccountably, as his mother and sisters thought, who were very proud of him, and longed to show him off, and most naturally, as his father thought, who had a very liberal indulgence for the carelessness of young men, he disappeared shortly before morning service, and had not been heard of since.

This was the *corpus delicti*.

Before we introduce him to speak for himself, just a word or two about the rest of the family.

The Vicar of Drellington was a man of nearly sixty years of age, portly, good-humoured, decidedly plain, but as decidedly agreeably in manners; he was an immense favourite in his parish; with some a boon companion, though far be it from me to hint that he was an intemperate liver, or an encourager of intemperate living. A slight sketch of his antecedents will explain him best. Early in life he had been taught to believe that his future must depend on himself, (a good thing if it were taught to all of us, whether true or not,) and possessing good parts, he had so applied himself to profit by the lesson, that a career through school with distinction, and through college with more than credit, found him in possession of a fellowship in his university at the age of twenty-three. From that moment one of two courses remained open to him,—marriage, the loss of his fellowship, with probably children, and nothing to eat; or patience, the common-room cheer, holy orders, and a living in his turn. He chose the latter, jilted the young girl who had fallen in love with him, for one of those thousand reasons, which induce girls to throw themselves away on men who possess everything in them that is least likely to attract them in particular, and applied himself to good eating, fiery port wine, proctorising young gentlemen, and other intellectual accomplishments, which are supposed by some to perfect the university fellow for the duties of a parish priest. All these he acquired with credit, told the best story in the common room, drank his share of common-room port as became him, punished the under-graduates with such good humour, that they rather liked it than otherwise; and at seven-and-thirty, became pastor of the rich college

living of Drellington, an accomplished scholar, a more than well-read man, and a most agreeable companion.

The appointment, of course, was a most popular appointment; at least, among those who had any right to have an opinion upon the subject. Perhaps too, among the poor, who were least likely to gain anything from the advent of such a man, it was not without its hopes. The evils which such an appointment caused to them, were the same as those which had characterised every other one up to the present time, and which would characterise the next and the next till the end of time. Every parson which the college sent them had mostly undergone the same training. As the living was the best in their gift, most of the new incumbents were men who had outlived their most active days. Turnbull indeed was quite a youth compared to most of them. Some had been book-worms, and never saw one-fifth of their parishioners, who to the number of about five thousand, were scattered over several miles, and were probably consigned to the care of a curate, zealous enough, possibly, but who had to learn his duty and was overworked. Very few had been married, preferring after their arriving at Drellington, to preserve that sweet independence which they had learnt so well how to value at the university. So that even a clergyman's wife was almost unknown to them. No, the evils which they suffered, resulted as everything does in this happy country, not from the nature but the system of the appointments. Drellington was a valuable college appointment, a lot, to the consequences of which it would ever remain liable, so long as college appointments are conducted on their present system.

But in the present instance there was ground for hope. The new Vicar's manners were in his

favour. He was as times go, positively a young man ; he had not outlived his energies ; he might work ; true, the college port, and the college audit, suggested passing doubts, but great things were said of him,—and oh, ye nymphs of Drellington, it is whispered that he thinks it the DUTY (ever to be venerated word,) the duty of a parish priest to take a wife.

The whisper came true, though not quite in the way in which the fair ones of Drellington would have had it. The new Vicar married, albeit in somewhat an unceremonious fashion. After making himself acquainted with the wealthier part of the flock placed under his care, in which much solid and fluid was consumed, and having placed them all under the care of a mild-looking and very inoffensive Curate, he took himself off for a month's holiday, from which he returned, wife and all. The lady turned out to be the sister of one of his brother fellows in the University, admirably skilled in contributing to the cares and comforts of these remains of a monastic age, but about as much adapted to the care of a straggling, agricultural parish as her newly-acquired husband himself.

Five children blessed this original union : George, the eldest, whose delinquencies have formed the subject of the early part of this chapter ; and four daughters, one of them deceased, as charming and beautiful a child as *the* one that dies in a family always is—the remaining three already presented to the reader's notice in the persons of Mary, Jane, and Fanny Turnbull.

Collectively, these three young ladies were as ordinary girls as one might light on anywhere. They were neither pretty nor plain, not disagreeable, nor the reverse ; not brilliant, nor remarkably stupid ; not ill-natured out of the common, nor blessed with much sympathy for any human being

out of their own family ; not grossly ignorant, nor remarkably accomplished. They could converse on any ordinary topic without difficulty, could agree with the last talker on what he approved or disapproved, and, in short, would pass muster ; yet there was nothing attractive in them—nothing which the taste, or sympathy, or fancy of any human being could be supposed to fasten upon. They had no fortune, nor would they have any. Nevertheless they were all destined to marry, and to marry well too, for some of the many undiscoverable reasons which conduce to the process of human mating.

Taken separately, these were their principal peculiarities. Mary, a not uncomely-looking girl, with already a touch of old-maidishness, could play and sing—that is, without the smallest sympathy with the subject in hand, and with an apathy quite distracting, and yet not ill ; but to external observation it always seemed highly improbable that the singer or player comprehended a word or note of her performance. Nevertheless, she presided creditably at the organ in her father's parish church. Little more information is required respecting her, as she does not figure to any great extent in this history. She was a tremendous hand at reading books, without any result as to the information she displayed. She had consumed the whole of her father's library, not in itself a small one,—all the books in Drellington, and all that she could get at in the neighbouring county town of Gramford, and she still read on and on in her resultless study.

Jane, the second, was as commonplace at first as her elder sister, and would have remained so, had not her capabilities been directed to a different object. It is probable that for some little time she was at a loss how to dis-identify herself from her, for the two girls in their nothingness were somewhat undistinguishable. However, a visit to a school-

fellow when she was a girl of fifteen, set this matter at rest for her. The schoolfellow being the daughter of a Clergyman who *was* a good parish Priest, and who was heart and soul in his Master's work, it would have been somewhat impossible for her, during this visit, not to have noticed the different ways in which the Clergymen of the two parishes conducted their respective duties. Jane's mind, any how, did notice it, and she soon came to the very evident conclusion, without a too violent strain on her reasoning powers, that her father did not do his duty at all.

On her return home, therefore, with this impression firmly fixed in her mind, she suddenly broke out into a violent fit of sick visiting, Sunday school teaching, and petticoat making, besides rating so soundly every member of the family for "their sinful neglect," as she called it, of those committed to their charge, that Mrs. Turnbull began to think that her second daughter was really a very excellent young woman. The Vicar, who, never over-working himself, had a peculiar dislike to any tendency towards the same disease in those around him, at first set his face against this outburst of zeal on the part of the young lady; and she persisting, some disturbances ensued; but her pertinacity, united to the easiness of his character, soon triumphed over all obstacles, and she had her own way in no very long time. So that, at the time of the opening of our story, Miss Jane had acquired a high character for excellence amongst a part of the community, though it will be for the reader to judge hereafter whether she entirely deserved it.

Of Fanny, the youngest, there is little enough to be said; but at the time of which we are writing a very interesting question had arisen respecting her. It had begun to be very generally allowed in Drel-

lington that she *might* turn out a beauty. Being taller than her sisters, with large eyes and a very youthful look, the idea suggested itself immediately. She had that ungainly manner which distinguishes young ladies on their progress from the nursery to the drawing-room, but there was a certain grace with it nevertheless. Moreover, she was at that critical age which makes the beauty or the fright.

Major Pander, a retired military officer, whose conversation was at times more forcible than elegant, had prophesied she would be a "*stunner*;" and all the young gentlemen at the various academies in the neighbourhood had composed effusions in her honour, and become Byronic in their dress from the same cause. The young lady was also in some degree aware of the effect which her promise produced.

But upon Mrs. Turnbull was produced the most curious effect, by the knowledge of her youngest daughter's growing personal attractions. That estimable lady took it into her head to consider the matter in the light of a domestic calamity. To her neighbours she was never tired of lamenting her distresses on this score. "My dear Mrs. Wreford," she would say, addressing a very clever woman, of whom we shall know more by and by, "You have no idea how wretched my dear Fanny's looks make me. Every day she grows more like my sainted Louisa, who was taken from this world of temptation in her infancy. The only comfort I had in my sorrow then was that she was removed providentially from dangers to which her exquisite beauty would have exposed her; and when I think now that my Fanny will be exposed to the same, I positively lie awake at night and tremble." To others she would speak of her as "poor Fanny," "poor child," "my much to be

pitied daughter," greatly to the indignation of the poor child herself, who would sometimes break out into such inopportune remarks as "Be quiet, mamma: supposing I have good looks, I don't see why I am to fall into temptation."

Mrs. Turnbull herself, though a bit of a wise-acre, was a very good-natured woman, desirous of pleasing, and ever ready to assist when it cost nothing. She had a bad habit of talking, on the most trifling occasions, what is vulgarly called *cant*. Some said she had picked it up from her second daughter; others that she had only acquired from her the idea of her husband's clerical inefficiency, and thought it sat well on her, by contrast, to appear severe in her way of speaking, while he was free, and even worldly. She certainly was continually addressing her spouse in terms of deprecation and even severity, and that before company; but we shall judge better of her by and by.

But all this time George, her son, is waiting at the door, where we cannot think of keeping him longer.



CHAPTER II.

FATHER AND SON.

"COME in, George," cried the old man, "and answer for yourself. I have had trouble enough to fight your battles."

"What is the matter?" said George, looking round upon faces which exhibited something very like displeasure. "What have I done?"

"It is what you have not done," said his mother, taking him fondly by the hand, for she was immensely proud of him. "Why were you not with us at church? think of the pride of which you deprived me, that of having my handsome boy by my side before the whole parish."

Part of this was a maternal delusion, for he happened not to be handsome.

"You of all people would not wish me to present myself at church to be shown, mother."

The vicar came to his wife's rescue at this unpleasant answer. "You see, George, that just as your mother's pride would have been great at your presence, so was her sense of shame keen at your absence, and that her son should set an example of Sabbath desecration to her husband's parishioners."

"I am sure, sir," said the young man, with a mock solemnity which almost destroyed his father's gravity, "the parish does not want examples from members of this family of how to do their duty."

Then turning to his mother with a good-humoured smile, "You know, mother, you gave me a lecture only yesterday against pride and vainglory, so that the parishioners, who know your character, will easily believe that it was to avoid the imputation of this sin that you denied yourself the happiness of having me next you. You may set your mind therefore at rest on this score."

Her mind, poor old lady, had been at rest the moment he came in; all that he did was right in her eyes, though she had before felt disappointed at his absence. But Jane was not going to let such an opportunity slip for a display of her peculiar sanctity, so before they all left the room previous to attiring themselves for church, she said, "You seem to think no excuse necessary for the sin itself, George."

"What sin, most sainted sister? that of not being trotted out before the Drellington fair in obedience to my parent?"

"You know what sin," replied she, severely; "absence from God's house."

"Jenny dear, go to your school, and teach the young idea," said her brother, "you are wasting time on me."

"Don't say so," interposed Mary, "it cannot be a waste of time to speak on such a subject."

"Surely it is if I agree in all you say," said her brother, "you want me to own that it is a wicked thing not to go to church. Well, granted."

"Then why did you do the wicked thing?" continued pertinacious Jenny.

"There now, that is just what I call waste of your valuable time," said he, caressing his younger sister's soft cheek. "You take it quite for granted that I have not been to church because I have not been to your church. As it happens I have been to church."

"Been to church!" they all cried in a breath. "Where?"

"Ah! that is another question. Give up the first,—confess yourselves vanquished, and we will talk about where."

But now his father's curiosity was roused. "Nonsense, George," he said, "there is no church where you could have been."

"There is Ebenezer," said his son.

"Ah! but that is chapel, not church."

"It is a place of worship," he persisted, delighted at their curiosity.

"You've not been there," said his father. "Girls, get you gone, he is making game of you."

"I am not, on my honour. Stay! as you are fairly beaten—I have been to Holycross."

"Holycross!" screamed the whole party in a chorus of tones which varied between those of indignation and alarm.

"Holycross," repeated George. "Why, what is the matter with you all? That is a church, is it not?"

"And did you hear Mr. —," Jane could not articulate the name.

"Mr. Markham? Yes, I'm told that is his name; a handsome fellow he is, and such a sermon, sir," turning to his father.

"Sermon!" cried the excited Jenny. "He preaches the Real Presence."

"Why should he not?" said George, in his turn utterly bewildered. "I went over to see Tom Beaumont, my old tutor, and I found him flown and this chap in his place; a good fellow too, he seems.—Only I had rather have seen old Tom."

"Don't believe him, mamma," interrupted Jane, impetuously. "I see through it all; it is that wicked girl Ethel Conway, who is always upholding

this *Tractarian*,¹ this Jesuit, and who has planned it all. This story about Beaumont is a subterfuge from beginning to end: as if George would not have told us where he was going. Why, he has not mentioned Mr. Beaumont's name since his return."

"Now, Jenny, you do want a strait waistcoat," said her brother. "What should Miss Conway have to say to me about a man I never heard of before in my life? What harm should I have done if Tom Beaumont *was* out of the question?—This Markham preached a short (with a sly look at his father) plain sermon, and so preached that if I had not been anxious to know what had taken old Tom away, he would certainly have persuaded me to stay for the Sacrament. So, you see, there can't be any harm in him," he added, with a look of triumph.

"I knew it would come," said Jane, with her eyes cast down, her nostrils distending, and speaking in a low but very distinct tone, (it must be allowed she did not do it badly.) "I knew it would come, when this man was first brought so near us; making no attempt to move among us, but biding his time so stealthily, till his opportunity arrived. I knew that our shortcomings would bring it upon us; but," she said more firmly, "that it should be through one of ourselves!—I warned you, mamma, you know I warned you. The time is at hand when at last you will acknowledge that I am no false prophet." And with this beautiful effusion she went off to the Sunday school.

"And I think," said the vicar to his wife and

¹ *Tractarian*.—This is not the word which Miss Jane Turnbull really employed, and the reader should bear in mind that wherever this same expression occurs in subsequent pages it is not the expression which the parties used. As however the other expression is one which is a play upon the name, and in its application a libel on the character of one of the most illustrious doctors of the English Catholic Church, the writer cannot permit himself to transcribe it in these pages.

daughters, "you had better get off somewhere too; I want to speak to George before service, and I should think he wanted something to eat."

"No," said his son, "I got some luncheon out of old Jeremiah Bate, and if you give me a glass of wine now I shall exist till supper time. But first of all tell me what is all this about the Holycross curate and Jenny?"

"Oh! nothing of any consequence," said his father, "you know we hate extremes in this house. Mr. Markham is an extreme man—said to be a Tractarian, I believe, and Jenny is a little warm on the subject."

Now this speech was positively untrue, the simple converse of it being the fact. Neither Mr. Turnbull nor any one in his house hated extremes. Had it been the fashion in the village for the people to stand on their heads the vicar would have done likewise, and merely for the sake of a quiet life; and for the same reason would have adopted any other preposterous line of conduct. Secondly, he did *not* believe Mr. Markham to be an extreme man; he knew nothing about it; some one in the village had said so, some one else had shaken his head; the community had taken the same cue, and so therefore did the vicar. Thirdly, Jenny was *not* a little warm on the subject; she did not care a straw about it, but was playing the hypocrite for her own purposes, and her father knew it. And lastly, she was a living instance in herself that extremes were not only not hated, but very complacently tolerated at the vicarage.

Whether George Turnbull knew this or not is immaterial just now. He was at the present moment fairly perplexed, and pertinaciously pressed for information.

"There now, a Track-arian;" (so he pronounced it,) "I heard that word to-day before, what is it?"

"Oh, you know what a Tractarian is," said the Vicar, quite satisfied, and dismissing the question; never thinking for an instant that a young soldier, who had been seven years absent from his country, which he had left not much over sixteen, was probably but imperfectly versed in theological discussions and theological slang. "And it is about this very man that I want to speak to you," he continued, "since you have seen and heard him do duty."

"Why, surely you know him yourself! A brother parson, living three miles off, can scarcely be a stranger."

"But this is one, nevertheless, and for many reasons. Of course, I called on him when he came here, and asked him to dinner; but he excused himself, on the ground that he was desirous of devoting himself entirely to his parish, until he had thoroughly become acquainted with it. And I was not sorry; for your sister has set up an opposition to his principles so violent, as absolutely to infect your mother; and then, what with the views of the parish on the same subjects—I was glad enough to let well alone."

"Then he is not married?" asked his son.

"He has a sister living with him."

"And my mother has not called on her?"

The Vicar shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, but this is too bad. I will speak to her myself. This man's views are but one man's views, and, I should not wonder, are greatly exaggerated. Anyhow, they can't excuse *our* want of good breeding. If looks mean anything, I'll swear he is a gentleman, every inch of him; and what he must think of us! It brings the blood to my face, the very thought of it. One thing I am determined on: I'll call myself on him, and that at once."

"Pray don't be hasty, George," urged his father, under some undefined idea that such a step would produce discussions, and perhaps scenes, and thereby put him out of his way. "Only wait till after next Sunday."

"And why till then?"

"I'll tell you in a moment: only answer me a question or two first. Did you see anything remarkable in the mode of conducting the service this morning?"

"You must remember," said George, after reflecting an instant, "that I have not been into an English Church some few years; but as far as I can remember the mode in which the Drellington services were conducted, I certainly did remark one striking difference."

"And what was that?"

"Why at Holycross every single soul seemed bent on worshipping their Maker; it really seemed as if they were in earnest, whereas Drellington folk used to be—well, never mind, they are better now, perhaps."

"Have your joke," said the Vicar, partly joining in the young man's laugh, "and answer my question seriously."

"Well, I saw nothing that struck me. The children's singing was good, and the little organ was played exquisitely."

"That was his sister. But about the—about Mr. Markham's manner—about the church furniture itself?"

"No, I think not. He preached a short, but very persuasive sermon. Stay, he turned direct round to the east during the creed, which would have a funny effect in your great mountain of a desk; and as to furniture, I saw nothing. There was the old cross which Beaumont had; that was always there."

"Not always; it had been removed, and, from what you say, is restored: but did you see no crossings, no genuflexions?"

"I don't exactly know what you mean by genuflexions. At due periods we all went down on our knees; and as for crossings—"

"Stuff, George! do be serious for a moment. You have been in Roman Catholic countries, and must know what I mean."

"I really did not; but now you call my attention to it, I did remark that he bowed his head, though almost imperceptibly, at every mention of our SAVIOUR'S name. But do tell me, what has this to do with my waiting till after next Sunday before I call?"

"Just this. You know that a new church is to be consecrated at Gramford this week, and I am engaged to preach therein on Sunday evening next. My Curate, Christopher, is so ill, that I am constrained to extend his leave till over that day; and I have been disappointed in every attempt to supply my own place here. Your report is so cheering, that I am confirmed in half a mind I have had to ask this man. His appearance would go a great way to remove the prejudices against him, and you might then induce your mother to call."

"I don't see why that should prevent my calling first; but your plan is a good one: only, there is one thing I do not understand. Has nobody else in the place held out the hand to him? What have the Wilfords, the Wrefords, the Gascoignes been about? You seem all to have forgotten your manners in Drellington."

"The circumstances have been peculiar. After the exploits of your friend Tom Beaumont, the late Curate, this parish was in no hurry to patronise a Curate of Holycross again, till after some probationary period had elapsed. The Wrefords, too,

had the scarlatina in their house; Mrs. Wilford was anxious about her boy Cuthbert—”

“ Oh, come, father, none of those reasons. Beaumont’s having been blown upon was an additional reason why they should show they had no ill-feeling towards his successor—and to his sister too, a young lady! With Beaumont, moreover, I have no patience. Why did he not stay, and face the charges out ?”

“ You are under some misapprehension,” said his father. “ Beaumont did stay, and face them out. How is it—I forgot to ask—that you knew nothing of his removal ? I thought, of course, your sisters wrote and told you.”

“ Not a word,” replied George ; “ nor was a word mentioned since my return about him. What surprises me more about it now is, that in the village here, among the tradesmen even, not a soul should have said, ‘ So we’ve lost your old tutor, Master George,’ or ‘ They’ve got a new parson at Holy-cross, Master George,’ nothing regarding either the man or the place.”

“ Oh, as to that, it’s not more extraordinary than your making no inquiry about them yourself. But you don’t seem very well informed now. What did you learn over there ?”

“ Just this. It struck me shortly after breakfast, that I’d gallop over on the pony, and see my old friend Tom, hear one of his sermons, almost new, as they would be now to me, though I have heard them so often—(I think I see him now, commencing with that eternal text of his, ‘ And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man,’ on which, I am sure, he preached one hundred times, at least)—and then I intended an early dinner and a cosy cigar with him. So think how floored I was when I got into church, and found this new fellow working away with all the prospective confidence of per-

manent occupation. Well, after church, I stumbled over old Jeremiah Bate; and when we had talked about the cows and the east wind a bit, I asked him what he had done with Mr. Beaumont; but for some time he pretended to think I was laughing at him. 'Well,' I said, 'just tell me this: is he gone for good?' 'May be, sir,' he said, 'that depends on hisself.' 'Is this his curate?' said I. 'Well, I don't rightly know whether he calls hisself Mr. Beaumont's Curate or no,' said he; 'leastways, he is in his place.' 'Come,' I said, 'Bate, do tell me: I give you my word of honour I don't know, or I should not be over here now after him. What on earth took him away?' 'Well, sir,' he says, 'I don't nowadays like talking about other folk's affairs; but you was a friend of his, and if you don't know, the tongues at Drellington ain't so bad as they was. It is just this, Master Turnbull: Mr. Beaumont took a drop now and then.' 'To be sure,' said I, 'and it's more than now and then that I have taken a drop with him too,' and I thought of a rouse we had together one night. 'Well,' continued the old man, 'may be, of late, he was not so careful about letting folk know what he did. Hows'ever, some folk got hold of it, and a cry was made about it, and he—' 'And he,' interrupted I, 'took himself off for a time until the matter blew over.' 'That's just it,' said Bate; 'and now you have the long and the short of it;' and I could not get another word out of him on the subject."

"Well," said the Vicar, "the truth is you've got the short, but not the long of it, which is this. After you left, Beaumont got imprudent. About two years ago, or more, I think—say three years ago—he had a slight fever; and when he got over that, he began to go down the hill in right earnest. Why, sir, he improvised a number of *al fresco* half-

way houses on his rounds to his parishioners. He'd hide a bottle in a ditch near Black Bridge, and another in the cleft of a tree at Callington, and another in Clifton Spinneys, so that he might take a pull as he passed on his pony. And one day a bottle was found in the pulpit."

"He could hardly use it there, surely."

"Not on Sundays, perhaps; but he could get into the church at all hours during the week. However, there it was; an inquiry was made, all these things came out, and Master Beaumont was suspended for two years."

"I hope you stuck up, sir, for the poor old man," said George, with much feeling. "He had years of sorrow, deprivation, and disappointment at one time."

"The best way in which his friends could serve him, my boy, was by holding their tongues," said the Vicar. "I knew a great deal more than was supposed. If I had come forward, I might have been asked awkward questions. If a man will become a slave, he must not be surprised at having to bear the consequences of his bondage. I must go now; the bell is nearly finished. I suppose once church is enough for you."

"I'll attend with my mother this evening."

And the Vicar departed, not ill pleased to be off having to defend himself from the accusation (of which he was certainly guilty) of having deserted an old friend in the hour of his need.

His son remained looking out of window for some moments after his parent's departure, when, turning round with a sigh, he said aloud, "Well, poor old chap! I must find out where he is, and write to him. And this Markham, this Jesuit, and what did my father call him?—a Track-track-tarian—a fellow who's on a different track to himself, I suppose. If that is the case, Jenny is a tremen-

dous trackarian. I think I should be one if I was in the Church. Ah! what would our fellows say to these parsons! I'll call on this Markham tomorrow, that I will, and see if he is a good fellow or not. I wish he'd make love to Jenny—that would be a lark."

And so, throwing himself on the sofa, like many other young gentlemen who do not possess large resources in themselves, he composed himself philosophically for a siesta.

The account we have given of Beaumont may seem not only overdrawn, but almost impossible in the present day, when the Great Head of the Church has mercifully awakened her from her lethargy, and constrained her Priests to consider, in some degree, the solemnity and sacredness of their high calling. But, some thirty years ago, such instances of miserable unfitness for the holy office were, alas! only too common; and even this last summer, the newspapers contained the history of a case which was fully as glaring as that of Beaumont. We have, however, reason to thank God that such profanation is daily becoming more rare.



CHAPTER III.

THE CURATE OF HOLYCROSS.

THOSE who can call to memory the stirring scenes of the old coach days, and more particularly those well versed in the annals of the great north road, will not require to be reminded of the famous six mile stage from Drellington to Gramford. It was, indeed, a favourite piece of ground for displaying the respective excellencies of coach competition. Always in order; undulating in its nature, with those little dips and pitches in it, which the dragsman loves, wherein the team is anon well in hand, anon "waking up," as the ground begins to rise, it presented a rare prospect of delight to the traveller who interested himself in contests of the road. There will be no need to tell *him* that after leaving the first mentioned place he will have the close shrubberies of Colonel Wreford's estate of Newlands on his right hand, and the well cultivated glebe of the vicarage land on his left, or that his eye will be well feasted for more than a mile and a half with as rich a piece of English rural scenery as his heart can desire. But it is necessary for the purposes of this history to inform those who have never travelled on this coach road, or having done so have been asleep during the performance, that after passing over the mile and a half so mentioned the traveller will find himself on the upper ridge

of a broad common or plain sloping towards the south, nearly two miles in breadth, which the road skirts from east to west in its course towards the important county town of Gramford. This tract of country is now almost entirely enclosed, and was partly so at the time we write; but was then quite open enough to be in doubtful weather as dreary a spot as can well be imagined: not that even then it was without the attractive beauty peculiar to all English scenery; for there is something in our land which distinguishes it from all foreign lands, that be a spot ever so cheerless, ever so swampy, ever so solitary, it is sure to be relieved by some object, distant enough, but still there in the shape of a hovel, or spire, or even a chimney pot, a gatepost, a patch, something which evidences the presence or the industry of man. Abroad, this is not always so; but with us, to our pride be it said, there is ever a charm resulting from their presence which gives a name to the most commonplace prospect we look on—that it is thoroughly English. In the present instance, it must be allowed that after the smiling vicinage of Drellington, Uppershott Common did at times suggest anything but agreeable sensations. By some freak of nature the wind on the ridge over which the road wound, always seemed to blow from a disagreeable quarter,—coach travellers complained that it invariably took you on the side of the neck, whether it blew from the lofty woods of Lord Tramontane's estate, over towards Gramford, or Sir Henry Beeze's coppices in the contrary direction. It was never a full-faced wind. The clouds in that locality too had sometimes, and it was said oftener than was consistent with strict impartiality on their part, a dull, disheartening, slate-coloured look about them, which portended rain, but resulted in nothing better than small, searching, irritating dust. And when there were

no clouds, no wind, no dust, save what was raised by the passing traffic, the sun would pour down in a vexatious, stupid, blinding glare, without shade or relief to the eye, for then the grass on either side of the highway was of a yellowish-whitish brown. And yet there were times when Uppershot Common put on its good looks; when the turf was soft and springy to the equestrian's trot; when the lovely cultivated farm land miles off, at the bottom of the slope, smiled to any who chose to look at them; when Gramford Minster low down there to the south-west would not fail to arrest the attention of the picturesque lover, and the smaller spire here in that bend or dip, would raise the remark, "There's a pretty little church;" as indeed it was in more respects than one, for Lord Tramon-tane the patron of the living had lately restored it, and it was one of the sights of the neighbourhood. Then again, in spite of other attractions, there was ever that distant indescribable hum which pervades the contemplation of nature in our glorious country with other sounds unimportant in themselves but forming a part of the great charming whole, the tinkle of the sheep bell, the cry of some wild bird, or as at this moment the silver toll of Holy-cross church calling the Christian to the Wednesday evening service.

Holycross church! it is that to which the spire belongs of which we spoke just now, and the straggling line of houses fancifully setting to each other like girls in a boarding school quadrille is the village of Holycross, all of them clean and tidy but with a somewhat sleepy look; and a little away to the left is the parsonage house, square, low, but thatched like the rest, only, by way of showing his station in the place, with his thatch thick and neatly cropped in, and his windows of a somewhat superior glass, the trellis work between each of

which perfectly revels in creepers. A little farther on the schools, of greater pretensions still, for they are the offspring of kind and loving hearts and still more bountiful hands—thatched though also—for Holycross, like “Woodmere,” is vain of its uniformity, but with woodwork gables fancifully cut and little bits of carved work here and there.—This is Holycross, but not all Holycross, for the parish consists besides of the hamlets of Callington, Cromore, and Little Holycross, (Holycross proper, by the by, is little enough in all conscience,) making in all an area of considerable extent, and numbering little less than eighteen hundred souls.

It may be easily understood that this living was one affording ample work to a clergyman of the Church. The extent of ground, the difficulty of being always among his flock, or of getting the flock to form one in the parish church, the concentration of the children at the schoolhouse, besides his other duties, required a vigilant, diligent pastor, and one not to be turned aside from his purpose by obstacles however great. Such a man the Earl of Tramontane thought he had found, when he recommended to the living the Rev. Thompson Beaumont, a fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and till the moment of his induction private tutor to his lordship’s eldest son Viscount Auster. How far he was mistaken in the actual result we know already, but let us hope for charity’s sake that it was not always so, and that Mr. Beaumont, who was a man certainly of first-rate talents, of taste and high education, may during part of the time at least, during which he held the cure of Holycross, have endeavoured to discharge his high office with fidelity, in so far as he had apprehended its weighty duties.

About three years, however, before the commencement of this history, circumstances did come

to the ears of my Lord Tramontane, which induced him to think seriously of the state in which matters were conducted in the village. Being a nobleman of the strictest views on church discipline, he had also long turned his attention to the state of religious feeling in the country, and like all good churchmen had viewed with hope and exultation the struggles which the Church was making to emancipate herself from the difficulties which the apathy of her clergy and laity, and the spread of infidelity in the land, had entailed on her. He now heard with dismay that a Baptist preacher had opened a room at Callington, that a minister of some other dissenting denomination purposed the same in Holycross itself, and that the subject had afforded ground of congratulation to all the nonconformist communities as well as to the radical journalists at Gramford. The Earl was not naturally an illiberal man; he gave the highest due to all those excellent men who by their labours have drawn the abandoned and the outcast to the hearing of the word of God, of whatever persuasion they may be. But he was a sincere churchman, anxious to make others think of THE Church as he did; Holycross had essentially been of the Church, and Holycross was as it were his own living.

And then came the ever daily increasing history of Beaumont's failings. The poor Earl! He may be pardoned if in his remembrance of how such matters generally end, he looked forward with some impatience to the period when Beaumont would put it in his power to appoint a new curate to his favourite parish.

Alas! for him, that event was not to take place as yet; two years elapsed; the scandal was daily increasing, but Beaumont showing no signs of drinking himself to death, when that crash arrived of which we have heard already. The curate was

sentenced to suspension from his *functions* (only) for two years. To this issue to the state of things the Earl would have preferred any other; and indeed at the inquiry, when he knew what the result would only be, if the charges were proved against the culprit, he was much inclined to use his influence in the man's favour, and for this simple reason—the inefficiency of the redress which the parishioners were to get for their wrong: for theirs really was the wrong. The mode of procedure against clerical offenders in these respects is certainly one of the most charming pieces of anomaly which exist in many anomalies of the law. The ecclesiastical power inquires and passes a verdict, but cannot pass a judgment in accordance with its verdict. It is in the position of a jury, but no more. The moment its verdict is passed its functions cease. For the sentence of suspension for two years, though really the consequence of the verdict, is no sentence. It deprives the offender of nothing but of doing that which he is very glad to be off doing. He is not deprived of his living, of its emoluments, or even of his house, but simply of the power of performing that office, the sanctity of which his conduct has insulted. In all other cases where legal redress is sought, the complainant expects to get satisfaction from the wrong doer; in the case of clerical offenders the complainant receives no satisfaction, and knows he can receive none; the defendant gives none; but parties who are not on their trial, viz., the parishioners, who are mostly concerned, and the patron of the living who is or ought to be bound up in the spiritual welfare of the parish, pay the penalty,—the one in the wrong done to their religious welfare, and the other in absolutely being prevented from putting to rights that in which he considers he has some prospective property.

Feeling this most acutely, it was no wonder that the Earl expressed himself with considerable feeling to the Bishop of the diocese after the suspension of Mr. Beaumont on their meeting in parliament. But his distress was much allayed on his learning that the latter, perhaps with some hope of atoning for his past conduct, had placed in the Bishop's hands the appointment of the gentleman who was to supply his place, as well as the use of his house furnished as he left it. There was then some consolation, for the Bishop promised that Mr. Beaumont's substitute should be a tried man, one of whom there could be no question. But still the Earl, who saw the evil as deeply as it existed, inveighed against the iniquity of the law; to which the Bishop replied, that the fault was not all in the inefficiency of the law, that even if it were amended there would most probably be some result similar in its ineffectiveness; that he himself knew a case in the West of England where the conduct of the offender had become a positive byword, that during divine service he was hardly ever sober, and yet that when an inquiry was made, the whole community, except those who petitioned for inquiry, actually espoused his cause, and so stood by him, that the charges entirely failed. With this very unsatisfactory reasoning the Earl was fain to rest contented, and perhaps was most induced thereto, by the conviction that the religious wants of Holy-cross would be well provided for, for two years at all events.

And where did the Bishop find a substitute? Why, he turned his eye on the great manufacturing town of Morlington, nearly thirty miles off, and upon the poorest and most populous parish therein, where people live in places that are called cellars, a name which from the coolness and cleanliness generally belonging to things of the same

name in other places, gives no adequate idea of such localities ; where toil, blasphemy, and sorrow jostle each other ; where the souls of the children are as unwashed as their bodies, and the hearts of the adults are as hardened as their hands ; where the better class of the community look on the Sacraments of CHRIST as "good things," or go to church because it looks well, or because they like good sermons, or because they have nothing else to do ; where dissent in every form, from Wesley to Johanna Southcote, stalks triumphantly, and despite her humility as to buildings, rivals the Church in the magnificent solidity of her edifices ; there the Bishop sought his curate. And why there ? Because there the clergy were making, against difficulties almost insuperable, the most gigantic efforts to raise the Church from that state of neglect to which it is now, let us hope, only a matter of history that it had fallen ; there, through disease, obloquy, infidelity, apathy, and jealousy, they with pertinacity, zeal, and never-failing hope and faith, have wrung out, inch by inch, every step on a disheartening road.

And thus the Reverend Edgar Markham became Curate of Holycross for the time being.

In the little drawing-room, in the parsonage of Holycross, on the morning after the scene at Drelington related in the first two chapters, two persons sat. The first was a young lady of from three to four and twenty years of age, well dressed, though with great simplicity, every part of her dress being of the same pattern and material, but without ornament. The second, a man of about thirty years of age, attired in the ordinary garb of a priest of the English Catholic Church. The face of the lady was more striking than beautiful. It was rather long, the eyes were large, and blue, and soft, and the head was exquisitely set on the slight

fair neck. The expression was however, the most striking characteristic in her appearance. It was not precisely sorrowful, nor serious, nor thoughtful, and yet it partook of all three. So calm and yet cheerful, and with something which told of hopes misplaced, yet not now mourned, prospects relinquished yet not regretted, and trials borne, yet without complaint. The complexion was fearfully pale, telling not of bad, but of weak health, the harbinger of *decline*. The whole countenance in its repose was a study. But when it lighted up as it did now (for a joke was going on between the two,) the effect was electrical, telling of the warm burning, loving heart that beat beneath, before it was torn and played with and cast off as are so many in this heartless, careless, self-loving world. This was Eva Markham.

Her brother was as unlike her as two of a family can be to each other. He was just above the middle height, inclined to be thick set, while she was slight; he dark, while she was inclined to be fair; he quick, irritable, and restless, while she was all repose; he in his troubles chafed and shook his chains, and was for ever contriving, she was calm, brooding over her wrongs, and only diffidently suggesting. When quiet, like her, he had the same tranquil, half melancholy expression, which in the pulpit he always preserved.

And with him too, it could be seen that the hand of disappointment had spared him as little. The premature silver streaks in his dark hair had their lesson. Oh! that man would but know the inexpressible blessing of a great affliction, or of a long course of trial, if it come when the energies are young and fresh, and if the sufferer drink the cup to the very dregs. True, it leaves the feeling of what might have been if—and if—but in demolishing early hopes of prosperity, it makes us

know how worthless that prosperity would have proved had it been realised. The hand of trouble on Markham had taught this lesson, and now life found him more hopeful, more capable of enjoying its blessings by a hundred times, than had he followed and prospered in that road to which his great abilities and early ambition had led him. The energies were the same as before, under control indeed, but the same; the determined restless activity in seeking his object was the same, but the aim was different, and one quality he had acquired which in early days he never knew—Steadiness of purpose.—“Temper, O LORD,” was his daily prayer, “and purify these energies, and then shall they be ready to be sanctified to Thy use.”

The brother and sister were seated opposite each other, she with some needlework before her, he with a note in his hand, and both of them laughing.

“I suppose you will not go,” said she.

“Indeed I see every reason to induce me to go,” said Markham. “I have long had a fancy to stir up these Drellington sleepers, and see, with a little patience my fancy is gratified.”

“But how can you leave the service here?”

“There is no service here in the evening, you know as well as I.”

“True; but you had set your heart upon commencing one as well as the other two.”

“I certainly had, but remember my stay here is temporary. I cannot move in this matter, without consulting the incumbent, and I hardly know, poor man, how to bring such a wish before him. His duties will be hard enough when he returns, as it is. At all events, that can’t interfere with next Sunday.”

“No, but I am alarmed at your fancy to stir up these people as you call it. Ever restless Edgar!

you too, who at Morlington, sighed after the country, and a quiet little parish of your own."

"I sighed after the country for your good looks, little sister," said her brother fondly, "and as for a parish of my own, I haven't got that yet."

"But you promised me you would not mix in society; it will be the same as before, you will be helping other people and working yourself to death, with your own work as well."

"My dear Eva, pray don't be so desponding, Drellington is three miles off; I am not likely, nor shall I be able to be often there. But you know my sole object in life now; if I have a spare moment from my business, may I not try to push our Master's interests elsewhere?"

"How can you, Edgar, in Drellington? They have their own Clergy. Such interference would be unwarrantable!"

"Oh! simple girl, who is going to interfere? Just listen, now! Drellington is one of those dear parishes of the time of Queen Anne, wherein the people perform their religious duties with regularity after a given pattern. Once a week they follow the service through the Prayer-Book, of the intention of which they do not understand one word. They listen to their Pastor's sermon, by which they are much edified, though it never enters their thoughts that it is intended that they should regulate their lives thereby. They teach their children the Church Catechism, the true meaning of which they have never yet laid to heart. They partake of the Holy Communion once a year, because their fathers did before them: and all this through ignorance only."

"Well! supposing they do, what business is it of yours?"

"That should not have been Eva's remark. But I will tell you. Their conduct is my business, because they wish to make my conduct theirs. I

find—for I keep my attention wide awake—that they have been making much inquiry as to my principles. Accidentally they discovered that I had ordered the Cross to be replaced on the altar here. I had, in fact, no idea that it had ever been removed from thence, except for incidental purposes, but it appears that Mr. Beaumont did order it to be removed, not in consequence of any complaint, but perhaps to conciliate the opinions of the gentry in his approaching difficulty. However, there it is now, and my character is settled at Drellington—the Puseyite parson ! on the high road to Rome, &c.,—and this in the mouths of people who, from the parson to the labourer, are ignorant of the veriest A B C of the ritual they pretend to follow. Could there ever be a finer opportunity for just letting a ray of light through some chink of their callous understandings ? Their own Vicar asks me to preach for them. Be it so ! but I shall preach not one word which they have not heard before—not one syllable that can be construed into being at variance with their own Pastor's teaching. Now, mark the result. My conduct will be defended by some one, for I am young and unmarried : ' Who dared say he was a Puseyite, indeed ! ' ' Oh, it was ill-natured Mrs. A., or that foolish old thing, Mrs. C. ' ' I, for my part, ' one will say, ' will have no objection to ask him, he looks too good-natured to be offended. ' And so they will : and that is all I want."

" All you want ! " said Eva, " but when you answer and instil into them your insidious counsels, won't that be interfering ? Will you not be called a Jesuit, too, when you are found out ? "

" Oh, very likely I shall be called a Jesuit some day, and with about as much reason as I have been called a Roman-Catholic : but as for interfering, no,—I am only answering questions put to me. The scepticism of these people merely results from sheer

ignorance. It is not that they are Low Church, because they are not High-Church, or that they are bit by the self-called Evangelicals. It is that this community at Drellington is sleeping the dangerous sleep of religious apathy. They are most of them educated people, and without any great bias on either side. Let them hear the truth, not forced upon them, but as it will come in answer to their own inquiries, and leave the rest to God. What startles half the world is, *the innovation of truth!* but when they have once heard it—when the novelty has worn off—the truth will still remain. Remember what happened at Morlington when our incumbent dressed his church for Easter with altar-hangings. The people cried out ‘Popery;’ twenty of them left the church that very morning, and poor old Baldwin was for removing it all, but that I persuaded him to let it rest only one more Sunday. And what was the consequence? When the congregation heard it was to be removed, they came in pretty strong bodies to beg that it should be retained, and the very twenty dissentients agreed in the principle that it was right to devote of our worldly goods to the adornment of God’s house, and averred that they themselves were willing to contribute to velvet altar-cloths and lettern cloths, and pulpit-cushions, but that this curtain, as they termed it, was quite a new idea, was paltry,—was like a bed-curtain, in short. So that their real objection dwindled from a dispute on the Papistical, to what was, in reality, but a matter of taste, and so they all came back again.”

“Well, Edgar,” said his sister, “I know you have great tact, and trust to that; but still, if you succeed, I shall see still less of you, for I am a poor weak little thing, and cannot go among them, as you will, in that case, soon do. I know I am wrong and selfish in saying this, and I must conquer the

feeling; but Edgar, if you fail, I shall have the mortification of hearing your motives traduced, and your religious character aspersed."

"Oh! Eva, is that fair?" he said, sitting himself beside her and taking her hand. "If my motives are good, and if God prospers the work, do I not know that my joy will be yours? It is that you are distrustful in little beginnings. Let them once get great works, and your faith outweighs mine."

At this moment a servant-girl entered, bringing a basket of superb hothouse grapes, garnished with peaches.

"Any message, Polly?"

"The man said, mum, that he was to inquire if Miss Markham felt stronger to-day," replied the girl.

"Give my best thanks, Polly. Oh! Edgar, did you ever see such fruit?"

"No: it is like all the fruit which can only be got in this land. No Italian suns—no eastern sky can bring to perfection such fruit as this. The soil is unkind, the temperature cold, and, what is worse, variable; but man can even vanquish nature when God gives the increase."

"What a strange girl she is, Edgar, to be so thoughtful of me, and yet never to come and see me. I should like to know her. You've never seen her, Edgar."

"Oh! yes I have."

As quick as thought she turned her face towards him, and an inquiring, painful look passed across it. He noticed the look, but answered, coldly, "Yes, I met her accidentally in the house of a sick man at Callington. I heard afterwards that her father occupied Mervyn, which is now being pulled down, and that she was born there, so it was no wonder she should be where she was."

"Did you speak to her?"

"I did. I thanked her for her attention to you in this way," and he pointed to the fruit, "but she was constrained—half frightened, I thought; she said something about her sorrow for your health, but I feared my sudden address had distressed her, so I said no more."

"But why did you not tell me this before?"

"It only happened on Saturday evening, and my Sunday work put it out of my head."

The servant again entered, bringing a card, on which was engraved, "Lieut. George Turnbull, 23rd Royal Welsh Fusileers."

"Gentleman's waiting," said Polly, dogmatically, and retired.

"Oh, this will do," said Markham, tossing it to his sister. "I shall find something out from him. He has only just returned from foreign service, and was in church yesterday morning. I'm off, so good-bye, little girl—keep up your spirits and eat your grapes, and don't go out in the sun."



CHAPTER IV.

DRELLINGTON ON A WEEK-DAY.

THE reader must not allow himself to suppose that, because I am about to devote two separate chapters to the development of the internal economy of this village, I purpose, therefore, to pourtray one differing in general features from such localities as they commonly exist. Drellington, in reality, represents a class varying from other villages, perhaps, in its peculiar idiosyncrasies, but partaking of the general features of the semi-village, semi-market town of this country. If, therefore, I call attention to the place at any length, it is because I like my friends therein to be on intimate terms with the reader at once; for my space is circumscribed, and in future they will have to speak very much for themselves. It will, consequently, be very readily understood that Drellington, besides its parson and curate, boasted of an attorney and an apothecary—that is mere nature! In the present instance the former, a short, fat, well-to-do-in-the-world personage, was a man of considerable importance; for he superintended the local management of Sir Henry Beeze's and Colonel Wreford's estates, and gave those tremendous dinner-parties, in common with the Vicar and a Mr. Gascoigne, for which Drellington was famous. He was a good-humoured, vulgar old fellow in his way, a widower, but with

three daughters dreadfully like himself, and possessing ancles perfect prodigies in anatomy. The latter, a Dr. Doolittle, a very harmless old person, (supposed to be of the female sex), preserved through, one would have thought, surprising obstacles, considering he never did anything to deserve it, the reputation of being a first-rate doctor. Some people, the Misses Piminy, for instance, (two old maiden ladies, whom I need not describe further, for they, or their counterparts, flourish everywhere in places of this description,) averred that he could have made a fortune had he pursued the profession in London, and adduced various unanswerable names as authorities to prove their position. But, however, Dr. Doolittle, for reasons of his own, spurned the advantages open to him, and remained at Drellington to kill his townsfolk in peace and obscurity.

He also was a widower, with one son, of whom great things had been foretold any time these ten years, but who, like his father, seemed determined to work out practically, in his own person, the reputation of the family name. There was, it was said, another son, who was only mentioned in whispers, as being something too terrible to allude to above a breath, except by Miss Henrietta Gascoigne, a very open-hearted and open-mouthed young lady, (who was nicknamed "Harry,") and who confessed "that if she had fellow feeling for anything, it was for a scamp!"

Her father, Edmund Gascoigne, Esq.,—or, as he preferred being called, Ned Gascoigne,—was one of those eccentric persons, who, though they are born to position and wealth in the country, prefer being considered on the level with farmers, drovers, and so forth, because it looks truly English. He was a man of considerable shrewdness in his way, bluff, hearty, and vulgar; often doing charitable

actions, but always making a noise about it; a great politician, (of course, on the wrong side,) an attendant at all county meetings, learned in cattle, corn, and farming. He had some property on the edge of Drellington, where he lived; but the major part of his possessions were in a neighbouring county. He boasted of a ladylike wife, who wrote books, one quiet daughter and one noisy one, and all three handsome.

The Vicar, Mr. Gascoigne, and Mr. Warburton (the attorney) were the three planets in the dinner party line, around which the lesser fry revolved; and this dinner-partying was THE feature of Drellington. Twice a week in the village or neighbourhood one of these entertainments was got up, and they were carried out in royal old English fashion: the party being, for instance, at the house of one of these three, and consisting of them, of course, of the two Doolittles, of another attorney in a smaller way, of the name of Kirk; of Major Pander, of whom we know something, and shall know more by and by; of the Rector of Gramford, who, I am sorry to say, mixed in the giving and accepting of these feasts; of his wife and daughter; of Mrs. Turnbull and one of her daughters, Mrs. Gascoigne, &c.; commenced operations at six P.M., from the business of which the *gentlemen* never rose till eleven P.M., when they joined the ladies in the drawing-room, (where the party had been recruited by the arrival of sundry female juveniles,) having been engaged during the interval in what would be called in my college days *systematic hard drinking*, about twenty minutes after which time, the entertainment ordinarily broke up.

Now, let it not be supposed that I even hint that on these occasions the gentlemen took too much wine, or were even exhilarated. No: be it said to their credit, they took care never to go too far.

Miss Jemima Piminy, to be sure, did say that this was not so, but then she, poor old soul, wanted them to hear her performance on the piano,—a marvellous, and somewhat primitive piece of execution, which they, of course, during their potations in the adjoining room, knew nothing of. She went so far as to say, that she noticed strong evidences of these long *séances*, in certain stories poured into the ear of his neighbour by Major Pander when he entered the drawing-room: stories which she did not understand, certainly, but which shocked her, nevertheless, though she only caught the fag-end of them; and young Mr. Doolittle, too, had a fearful habit of looking ghastly when he emerged into notice from the dining room, and of carrying his eyes fixed in just such a state of hopeless aberration as that in which he would probably have fixed them, supposing him to have been coaching for a first-class degree in the University of Hanwell (Miss Jemima's father had been a college tutor.) But nevertheless everything as concerned the deportment of the gentlemen was in strict consistence with propriety.

Then why, it will be asked, do you, Mr. Author, write all this stuff against several estimable gentlemen, who do no more than you in enjoying their port without exceeding? Are you a man for tea and toast-and-water every night of your life? Or may be you can't afford port wine yourself?

No, reader, no: that is not it, I answer. I should find no fault in a layman acting in this way, if he had no higher views in life than to promote his physical enjoyment. But for a Priest of the Church of CHRIST so to pander to his fleshly appetites, is in the last degree reprehensible. Setting aside the deadly evil to his own soul, look at it in its effect on his people. The Vicar of a parish, an estimable man in many respects, full of life, spirits, and good-

humour, with talents, and means of displaying them, must always take a leading part in a community of this sort. I know that he gives the *tone* to the whole circle, but I know also that what is pardonable in a number of country gentlemen, is not so in him; that a Clergyman who takes his bottle of port at home on the Monday night, and his two and a-half on the Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evening, at such dinner parties abroad, but who, nevertheless, warns his hearers from the pulpit on the ensuing Sunday morning, not more than twelve hours later, against the snares of "the world, the flesh," &c.,—cautioning, perhaps, the poorer part of his flock against the crying vice of intemperance—I know that such a Clergyman will not be respected, and I know, too, that his very admirers at these same parties will be the first to cry out, "Oh! our old Vicar is not a good parish Priest!" And yet what is the part he has to play in the world? How much too it depends on himself how he plays it!

And yet I would not for the world have my readers think the Vicar an intemperate or irregular liver. His fault in these respects, probably arose from a love of companionship in his nature, and from a mistaken idea that the best way to show kindness of disposition, was in exuberance of hospitality on his own side, and in over-readiness to accept the same display on the part of others when offered to him. I would make this caution, as these pages may otherwise lead the world to form an unjust estimate of his tendencies to conviviality. He was, on worldly points, an easy, kind-hearted man, ever thinking that to please his friends was to ask them to his table.

The Reverend George Turnbull, however, really held Drelington in his hands, for much good, or for much evil. I do not say that he was the originator of these parties. But by his example did

he not encourage them? If he had ignored them, would they have been open to the same objections, or would they, as such parties, have existed at all?

The Vicar of Drellington too, represents a class, which though it vary in particular peculiarities, is the same as a whole wherever it is found. I do not mean to say that the late dinner party going is an inseparable fault of the class. This may be peculiar to Drellington, and some other places, and bad example may exist elsewhere in some other form. But the Vicar in his general outline is to be found too often. This one himself was clever, full of anecdote, brilliant in the pulpit. Every sermon showed the scholar and the gentleman. But alas! how few there are who learn from such a teacher, or from others like him.

But it must not be supposed that every respectable family in Drellington were of this dinner-going clique. There was Sir Henry Beeze, of Frosty Park, for instance. *He* never mixed in the society of Drellington at all. He fancied himself a patrician, and was, for all I know; so that in such a case, he was justified in never being commonly civil to a soul in the place, excepting on two occasions during the year, when he asked all the gentlemen to dinner, and all the ladies who had gentlemen to take care of them, without inquiry as to whether they moved in the same class. But these festivities were not of the true Drellington sort. For Sir Henry affected London hours at the commencement of his banquets, and country hours at their conclusion; in other words, he asked his guests at half-past seven, and packed them off home at half-past ten, a proceeding which Major Pander never failed very forcibly to denounce, with Mr. Kirk, over certain consolatory glasses of toddy, on his return to his own domestic hearth.

There was still another family, about whom the

reader has no doubt by this time become curious, inasmuch as it has already been mentioned more than once incidentally and mysteriously,—that of Colonel Wreford, of Newlands. None of this family were diners out, and perhaps, though mind, I don't say so positively, for this reason,—namely, that Colonel Wreford was member for Gramford, and was confined to the metropolis—for he was a working member, eight months out of the twelve. Mrs. Wreford, with one daughter, a niece, and three sons, little boys, always lived at Newlands, being devoted to her family, during the period her husband passed in town, excepting during the months of September and October, when she joined him at some watering place. So that the only time of the year when the Colonel could be said to form a part of the community of Drellington, was during November and December, and at this time he was so bored with his constituents' complaints, and his own efforts to be let alone, that it is not to be wondered at, that the Faction of Turnbull, Gascoigne, and Warburton, were unable to appropriate, hard as they tried it, even the minutest bit of him. And it was natural that they should try, for he was the model of an English representative, thoughtful, painstaking, considerate to all, of good family, and unblemished reputation.

But though he did not dine out himself, he gave dinners occasionally; as a public man he could not well help it; but on those occasions his dinners were always for a purpose; nobody in Drellington could possibly minister to that purpose; therefore nobody in Drellington was ever asked excepting the Vicar, who in right of his position, (mark reader, *the position* to which he owed such a duty and never paid it,) was *always* invited. On such occasions who would have recognised in the Reverend George Turnbull, B.D., with his sub-

dued affable manner, his theological learning, his white polished, mirror-like pate, and well-trimmed white whiskers, the Vicar of Drellington, who at Warburton's table, the night before, was convulsing his hearers with common-room jokes, stories of university campaigns against rebellious undergraduates, and bad parish puns. Oh, no! at Newlands, the Vicar rather ignored a glass of wine when offered it, and took it with an apologetic air, as if only to oblige the man-servant; suggested an early move to the drawing-room, and stood stupid and entranced behind Miss Conway's chair, (Colonel Wreford's beautiful niece) as she sang some little thing to please the demands of him and others, who knew that she sang very little, and that it teased her to be asked.

But this is only a fraction of Drellington. The Piminy's and the female part of the Vicarage, and Warburton's daughters of ancle power, and Mrs. Kirk and her four unmarried sisters, and Miss Gascoigne, how did they manage? Had they no gaiety? Of course they had; on off-days, certain tea parties used to take place, of a description as melancholy and tiresome as the dinner parties of the gentlemen were jovial. Half-past seven in the evening: tea, for instance at Mrs. Pander's; small talk for half-an-hour; tea half-an-hour; music for four hours; and sandwiches and sherry to wind up with. Now there was not a soul in the village, who could play respectably except Miss Turnbull, nor was there a piano-forte in the village upon which any one could play possibly, except Miss Turnbull's; so it stood to reason, that nobody could hear anything approaching to music, except at the Turnbells'. (Of course I exclude Newlands, because these festivities seldom took place there, though they did sometimes.) I leave the reader to fancy the dissipation of one of these evenings at

the Piminys', the Panders', or the Gascoignes'. Yet still, people contrived to be amused, as they always will, when they are inclined, and if the gentlemen were present, as they sometimes were, dinner engagements permitting, a good deal of honest hilarity and fun ensued. The stereotyped tea party however itself, in its unadorned simplicity, was a primitive and remarkable proceeding. And yet altogether, I never knew a more united little family than this village. There were no instances of personal hostility which prevented people meeting each other, and though there was a vast difference in the various stations of this small society, yet no feeling of pride in the least interfered with their mixing together indiscriminately. To be sure, Sir Henry Beeze was rather a wet blanket, whom even Colonel Wreford could not tolerate, and Major Pander's vulgarity was at times offensive enough to make even the Vicar blush; but in Drellington, every one felt it was Drellington, where Pander after all was born, though to the honour of the place be it said, he was not bred therein. Miss Piminy too, might rake up a little piece of scandal, and Mrs. Turnbull, in her good nature, might tell a little chain of imputations to the very person whom they most concerned, only by mistake mind, but these in comparison to the feuds which exist in some places, were but nursery quarrels, and on the score of harmony, (not instrumental but social) Drellington was justly proud of Drellington.

Colonel Wreford, when he was at home, contributed his quota to this general harmony. During those two golden months, for such they were to some hearts, he insisted on giving a succession of carpet dances for the amusement of the young folk; and to them all were welcome without distinction, and on such occasions relaxing from his senatorial gravity, he would be a child as well as the rest.

Then it was, that Pander used to shine, for on those occasions he could take liberties with the Colonel, and talk of it afterwards. Then Miss Jemima could pry into the mysteries of Mrs. Wreford's marvellous store-room, and Miss Anna Maria could squeeze jam and cream cheeses out of the housekeeper. And the children screamed, and young Doolittle talked of his prospects, and Gascoigne told lies.

And yet it was a pity—but Drellington was infidel; yes, reader, infidel—without belief. They knew no duties as Christians; they recognised the sprinkling of infants only as a form; and the Holy Eucharist as a memorial of their SAVIOUR's death *only*. They talked of these "*enlightened times*," when questioned on matters of Faith, and met the direct text of God's Holy Word, on too many occasions, with the inquiry of Nicodemus of old,—
"How can these things be?"



CHAPTER V.

DRELLINGTON ON A SUNDAY.

I KNOW no more charming contemplation than that of an English village in a thriving part of the country on a fine Sunday morning in June. The country has not yet quite worn off the fresh newness of her spring attire, nor has the sun completely caught up the bright drops of last night's dew. Well-to-do farmers revelling in new coats with wonderful buttons; children with small bunches of wild flowers; smart servant girls, lounging young bumpkins with clean faces, all flocking to the church porch, form together a pleasant sight. But it is on these occasions that the face of nature sets the fairest example, and excites the most vivid pleasure in the gazer as he looks and looks till his eyes are dazzled by the brightness of the day. In nature all things are in repose, but it is a repose which never ceases to set forth the glory of its Maker. Ever tranquil, yet ever seeming to pour out a hymn of thanksgiving. And in the discussions that have ensued on the Sunday question it has often seemed surprising to me that the advocates of contending views have not kept nature more in sight as a model for what they propose. Sunday is a day of rest—but of holy rest—surely as near a type as can be of that holy rest which the Christian hopes to gain at last, and for the attainment of which he has his prescribed course of toil here.

Drellington offered a fine specimen of outward Sunday happiness ; the beauty of the country, the general kindly feeling among all classes of the community, the loveliness of the village girls,—for Drellington lasses have a world-wide reputation,—the quaint old church, and above all the enchanting peal of the bells, too well known to describe here, would have waked to thankfulness a heart of stone ; and here come the school children, a rosy well clad lot, with Miss Jane particularly conspicuous among them in checking any rising tendency to happiness, and—the vicar I was going to say, but it was a slip of the pen, for he never troubled himself about it ; no, it is—the curate, Mr. Christopher, who returned late last night, (though not expected,) and who is particularly elated to hear that he will be relieved of the evening sermon by the new curate of Holycross ; Mr. Christopher is with them, not the vicar ; and now comes Sir Henry Beeze's carriage, who though an observer of Sunday himself, for he thinks it his duty to set a good example, has his horses and his carriage out whether he wants them or not, for he will have his servants smart, and therefore keeps them up to it this morning also, for fear they should get lazy, —“nothing so bad as idleness,” says Sir Henry, “for that class of people,”—and now here is Mrs. Colonel Wreford on foot with her little party, and Mrs. Wilford with her one invalid boy pushed before her in a garden chair, and busy little Miss Piminy in a great heat, who is asking Miss Jane Turnbull how her sister's headache is, because she, Miss Piminy, notwithstanding the warm weather, will take the organ for her, if it be not better, which for the sake of the congregation it is to be devoutly hoped it is. Yes, all things are radiant and pleased after their different fashions, as becomes nature and the day.

But when we get into the interior of the church

the scene is widely different, and suggests more than one lesson which may be useful to us in the course of this history. The edifice itself within so resembled many others which were common in the land a few years ago, that a very slight description will suffice for us. In the first place it was large, and if well fitted up would have accommodated with ease some eighteen hundred persons. The fine old arches with their broad bold pillars if unencumbered would have rendered the church a handsome as well as a useful building; but unfortunately they were burdened with two huge lines of wooden gallery, which had never evidently been contemplated by the architect, whoever he was, and which effectually marréd both such advantages, for one half of the people in these galleries could not see, and the other half could not hear. To aid still further, in marring both the picturesque and the useful, were a host of staircases always starting up in unexpected spots, and leading from no place in particular to no other place of any consequence; the nave, aisles, and transepts were crowded too with pews in most grotesque attitudes, and various degrees of declension, five feet and a half in height, some still further hidden from the view of the curious with brass rods and curtains, and each fitted up in various degrees of comfort according to the tastes or means of their occupiers. The altar-cloth and carpet were torn and ragged, the pulpit and desk cushions soiled and tarnished, the pulpit itself, or rather the row of buildings belonging to it, were fixed in the very centre of the church facing the nave, and consisted as it were of three generations of pulpits; for the lowest, or youngest, as we should call it, which was appropriated to that very dispensable piece of furniture, the clerk, was a pulpit in itself,—and the only advantage that can be presumed from the height of the highest, or

grandpapa, of the three, was that the vicar thereby effectually baffled any attempt on the part of his flock to prevent his scrutiny, if he were disposed to employ it in the delivery of his discourse. In this heap of wood and circular staircase the whole service on Sunday was performed, the communion office, except when the holy Sacrament was administered, included. Indeed the chancel was ignored as much as possible, and presented a pitiable spectacle; it was of considerable antiquity, and still retained amid neglect and the vandal-like alterations to which it had been subjected, marked remains of former magnificence, and of the *practical* religion of its projectors; but though of stone it had been in places repaired with brick, a commodity which had also been unsparingly used in the stopping up the lower parts of the windows to save the trouble of having too often to replace the glass: and oh! horror! on one side two entire windows had been filled up to enable a gigantic tablet, bearing a most mendacious exposition of the virtues of one of Sir Henry Beeze's ancestors, to present itself to the observation of every individual who sat opposite to it and who could not, from its magnitude, help looking at it.

It need hardly be mentioned that in all this confusion and carelessness to external arrangement the comfort or advantage of the poor were but little considered. Placed anywhere or nowhere, huddled in corners under the galleries, or scattered broadcast over the aisles, they received religious consolation just as may be. Example, it is useless to say, they had not: personal attachment to the old building, which had been their playfellow in their earlier and their companion at their mature years, and to the ground around it, which covered the mortal relics of all that was dear to, and revered by them, was the only tie which bound

them to its walls. And who knows, but for the movement of a few newly awakened and soon much to be maligned hearts, how long even this would have lasted?

Divine service was conducted of course after the same office apparently as in other country churches; that is, prayers were *read* in the truest sense of the word, and psalms said in their due order; the usual portions were chanted by the children to Miss Mary's accompaniment, excepting the "Te Deum," which the vicar said made the service tiresome,—a curious remark to come from the lips of the parson. But the whole proceeding showed an indifference that was quite contagious, and which would have carried you and me, reader, with it had we been there. The edifice was ill furnished and ill kept, the ministers and the congregation careless and inattentive, and the whole community—I speak not of particular exceptions which must exist in all communities—godless and irreverent.

It may be suggested with some appearance of probability, that among the church-goers of Drelington there must have been some, a few perhaps, but some who were painfully aware of these defects; some whose senses must have been wide awake to the tumble-down pews, the desecrated chancel, the sacrificed windows, if their feelings were dead to the carelessness of the general body of worshippers; some who had houses in town, and ties in different parts of the kingdom, and to whom mere comparison must have suggested the necessity of improvement or renovation.

And such, no doubt, there were. I think it is indisputable that the whole village would have hailed with enthusiasm the munificence of any one willing to rebuild or restore their church, and that some of the deficiencies in the rendering of Divine service were even now subjects of remark and of

merriment to many of them. But it is too much the habit of all the world to justify *abuse* on the ground of custom ; and where people are apathetic as to removing the abuse, they are generally dull in apprehending its real enormity. And so the evil continues. It is undoubted, moreover, that strangers and visitors to various families at Drellington expressed their opinions more or less freely on these subjects. But the answer invariably ran in some such way as this, "Oh! yes, it is very bad ; but any attempt at alteration would breed dissension, and we are all so united ;" or, "It did very well in my father's and grandfather's time, and it will last mine, I dare say, very well too;" or, "we are not worse than other places, and our parson is a capital fellow, which is not the case everywhere."

Such excuses passed, and alas! have passed for so many years that the evil has become almost incurable. But the Drellington public, like other publics, saw only the surface. They might acknowledge the carelessness—the wanton barbarity of the generation, which stopped up the windows, and demolished the architectural beauty of the whole by the introduction of "those" galleries,—but they perceived no particular objection to the apathy towards the external forms of divine worship which was particular to their own. "God looked to the heart, not to form," said the Vicar, one day, to a visitor who ventured to remark on some inattention to the requirements of the ritual. The heart! as if there was any *heart* in the services as rendered at Drellington!

Now, just see the paradoxical position to which such reasoners reduced themselves. They ignored external forms in the service, and so rendered the service itself a *mere form*. They ignored the forms which are the interpreters of many parts of the service, and so rendered those parts a dead letter : which, of course, to the large body of worshippers,

they became, inasmuch as they had not the means of understanding them. Their very objections reduced the service to the level of the objections they raised. And yet the very commonest exercises of common life would have convinced them of the fallacy of the position they advanced. There is not a thing in this life to which the senses are attracted, in which the essential is not clothed and made attractive by some form. The white ribbons of a wedding, and the dark weepers of the funeral are but external appliances, and yet if we transposed them, or abolished them altogether, who would venture to assert that either ceremony had its due amount of solemnity? The very food we eat depends for its zest on the manner in which it is served.

Or, to illustrate further: take the English fireplace, with its glowing coals of fire and welcome blaze, and compare it with the closed stove of Russia, Canada, or Germany. It is proved beyond doubt, that the latter, for the purposes of heat, are more effective; and yet I suppose there are very few indeed among us who would not prefer the former, because to *feel* the fire really, they must at the same time *see* it. Religion differs in no degree from such little matters as these, as far as the external principle is concerned. Years ago, Bishop Butler, whose orthodoxy has never for a moment been called in question, taught and convinced the world of this truth, "the necessity of external religion to teach and preserve doctrine,—of *worship* to prompt zealous and continued practice,—and of the homage of the *senses* to quicken the affections."

One of the evils which resulted at Drellington from the general apathy to external forms, was general apathy to fundamental ordinances, and in particular to the Sacraments. Not one tenth part of the community ever partook of the Holy Com-

munion at all—of this fraction, a large majority only once a year, and of the remainder, none more than once a month. It is not in my province to discuss the results of this evil, as I sincerely trust that all the readers of this history are Christians in principle, however callous the world, their occupations, or accident may have made them, and so it would be beside my purpose to do more than record the fact.

Another evil resulting was, the absence of all practical religion. No being purely human ever practised virtue without example. Our SAVIOUR'S life on earth is the best proof of this, and our Collects never fail to teach and recognise it at every opportunity that offers. Where was it in Drellington? Not in the Vicar, or in his daily life. The ministration of the sick and the poor he left to the Curate. Not in Divine service. His neglect of externals produced carelessness in his flock on their part. Perhaps in individual acts of charity and kindness it might be exhibited; but the "whole head was sick," and result there was none. Intemperance and immorality among the poor might be checked by their disastrous consequences in individual cases, but who could inculcate religious observance and life, with the state of religion in the place,—and how many death-beds were scenes of peace or resignation?

Another reason why the Vicar of Drellington had so much to answer for, may be gathered from the fact, that nearly all religious apathy proceeds from ignorance. He had a duty to perform, both by preaching and by example. Of what he did in the latter way, we know already, and for the former, it will be enough to say, that his sermons, though fervid, eloquent compositions, disclosing both ability and erudition, were more fitted for a fashionable London congregation than for an agricultural parish.

He taught literally nothing of what his parishioners ought to have learnt. Most of them understood what the seasons of Easter, Christmas, and Advent represented, but not one knew, or were ever likely to know how these seasons, Sunday by Sunday, developed each other, or that there was not a Collect, Gospel, or Epistle of the day during the whole, which did not carry out in its proper person some link in a grand chain. Still less could they be expected to comprehend that the minutest provision in the rubric was not without its lesson.

No wonder that they were careless of what was unintelligible to them, or of what to some was tedious and tiresome. No wonder that even in more educated communities we hear the remark that "the service is so long!" How can we expect people to do otherwise than consider that as meaningless, in which they have been taught to believe there is no meaning? How can we wonder at their seceding to a form of worship which has, at all events to their senses, the advantage of being intelligible?

It is to explain these forms,—to remove this apathy,—to teach these lessons,—to restore the channels of grace to their true place as the sole means of our sanctification,—to revive our faith in the indispensable doctrine of the Priesthood of CHRIST co-operating with His Priests on earth, in whom His power is vested, that the movement so-called Tractarian, commenced. But in this world, hand in hand with ignorance, goes prejudice. It is a matter of history now, how every attempt to enlighten, has been thwarted by visions of superstition and mummery. People *will* believe that the High Church party are in league with Rome, and *will not* understand, what common attention would teach them,—that of all bodies in the English Church, the Tractarians are most offensive to the

Roman-Catholics, for having raised a barrier between them and those who were far most likely to become perverts to their Church, namely, the *ignorant*.¹

It will be tolerably plain, from what has been said, that Drellington offered rare temptations to the demon of theological dissension, if he had chosen to take up his habitation among them. Suppose a parson, for instance to have been quartered on them who insisted, *coute qui coute*, on the immediate introduction of a pair of candlesticks, even though unlighted, and a Cross on the altar! Fancy the visions of the Inquisition, crucifixes, Cardinal hats, and other abominations which would have haunted the quiet inhabitants of this callous locality! And yet, from pure accident, Drellington actually possessed in its own church a single article which has raised on more than one occasion a most furious outcry against the High Church party, and which, of all those so-called innovations, of which they have been accused of introducing, they have been the least able to defend. Drellington actually possessed a *fixed stone altar*, and what was more remarkable, *did not see any harm in it!* Now, this affords a lesson which it is to be wished that some folk would lay to heart, namely, that the stone altar was never an innovation of the Tractarians at all, and has a fair claim to the argument which the Low Church party advance in favour of all the abuses they defend, namely, custom; and secondly, that what may have been objectionable on the ground of superstition in one age, does not of necessity become so in a more enlightened one. However, Drellington had its stone

¹ The names of some eminent perverts may be held up against the truth of this passage. And no doubt the Romish Church were in the highest degree proud of these. But equally so they would have been, of names of the same eminence among other branches of the Church.

altar, and had had it for something like a century and a half, and precisely the same singularity exists in many other churches in the kingdom, as well as at Drellington, viz., that nobody ever saw any reason to object to it.

It is not to be wondered at, that the announcement that the Rev. Edgar Markham would preach in Drellington church on the following Sunday evening, produced some little excitement in a community so constituted. Major Pander, the Vicar's churchwarden, a blustering, hasty sort of personage, seemed at first inclined to speak—what he had not got, by the by, viz.—his “mind:” but remembering that Mr. Markham was assisting the Vicar, and that on this latter depended much of the gratification of his pampered appetite, he wisely held his tongue, and contented himself with looking big after a method that might be construed any way. Miss Piminy and her sister, more unsophisticated, began to bewail an approaching tempest, though in what way they could not exactly explain; and Miss Jane Turnbull added to their discomfort as much as lay in her power, by the most awful prognostications, in which fire, temporal and eternal, largely prevailed, of the result of the Jesuit's advent. “She herself would not go near the church during the proceeding—no, nor would she look at it, (unless she looked through the west window from her own bedroom.) She would stay at home, and pray for them all,—for her brother—who *had* called her “humbug” twice during the week, to be sure, but whose future she foresaw too plainly, if he were not rescued, &c., &c.

But certainly the feeling which mostly predominated on the occasion, was curiosity—curiosity to see what a Tractarian really did which was different from other people, mixed up with a somewhat tenderer feeling of interest, particularly among the ladies,

who knew that Markham was universally well spoken of in his parish, and was singularly handsome and talented. Of course there were those who were ready, if he did anything to offend their religious convictions, to show their independence by walking out of church *en masse*. But against such people Markham, who had seen a good deal of the world, and had acquired a tolerable insight into human character, was always on his guard, and had on the present occasion no idea of displeasing.

The fact happens to be, (and George Turnbull, who had already made his acquaintance, and who had become perfectly fascinated with his frankness and abilities, had tried to convince the village of this,) that Markham was *not* an exaggerated enthusiast at all. He was merely a clergyman after the pattern of the Prayer Book. His sole purpose was God's glory, and he considered this to consist as much in strict observance of the ordinances of His Church as in the practical duties of a clergyman in the parish. But somehow, when his nomination as Mr. Beaumont's substitute at Holycross was known, somebody knew somebody else who had heard that he was curate at the one High Church at Morlington, and on this slender piece of information, properly bolstered up with surmises and conjectures, his religious principles were fixed in Drellington. Truth is, that it would have been very difficult indeed for any one who acted up to his profession, whether layman or clerk, to have attended Drellington church without doing something to excite surprise, were it only in the very simple duty of saying his prayers properly; and therefore in Markham's position, where the whole parish was on the look out for something they never saw before, it would seem next to impossible that he should run the gauntlet of watchful eyes and prejudiced opinions unscathed.

When George paid his first visit to the Curate, he had brought a note from his mother to Miss Markham, requesting her company on the Sunday in question with her brother at the tea and supper, which always preceded and followed Evening Service, at Drellington Vicarage. This invitation was declined by both. Neither of them had any desire to pass an evening with strangers, when the Vicar, the only member of the family who during their stay at Holycross had seemed aware of their existence, was away, dining after *his* sermon, at Gramford: and Markham for his part looked forward always to passing his Sunday evening in tranquillity at home. In any case it would have been in the highest degree imprudent on Eva's part to have attempted it. At Morlington during the preceding year she had been for many months dangerously ill, and though the removal to Holycross with its change of scene, fresh air and spring flowers had wrought at first a beneficial effect, and she had been able to accompany her brother in his pony-cart to make acquaintance with the parish, still as the season progressed, that deadly debility returned, and with it the pale face and sad look, betokening at no distant time a still more distant journey. On Sunday, however, her energies were always called in play. Ever so weak or ailing as she was, that morning found her in the schools, the worshipped and beloved of the place. The few minutes from thence to church were eagerly waited for by old and young in the parish to catch one sympathising word or smile, or even one glimpse of the slight, graceful figure, as she wound her way beneath the lime trees into the porch. As is the case with many girls whose life has been passed in delicate health, music was with her a passion, and here at the little church all the aspirations of that warm young heart found their vent.

She seemed too to infect all near her with similar feelings. The rude, untaught village children, when following her, sang faultlessly and in earnest, so that Holycross Church presented the most beautiful instance of how a service can be conducted, with real pleasure to the worshippers and glory to their Maker, although the means employed be ever so simple and rude.

The two services and the schools were as much as Eva could manage in one day, and at the end of them she was only too glad to get to her sofa and to a cup of tea to wish to move again the entire evening, even if she had power.

Markham then was to go to Drellington alone and to return on foot immediately after the service. The weather was lovely, the season Midsummer, and the turf on Uppershott Common had not as yet been burnt up; and so it was arranged.

Meantime expectation at Drellington was on tip-toe; the church bells were ringing, the church was well-nigh full, and at the very outset Markham committed an oversight, for which he ought to have been prepared. Poor Mr. Christopher, who was to read the prayers, was so over-awed at the remarkable self-possession of the new comer, and at the cool way in which he took what he (Christopher) thought a very hazardous experiment, that in the vestry he had not the courage to tell him that in Drellington Church it was the fashion for the preacher always to sit among the congregation like one of themselves until the psalm preceding the sermon. Old Gubbins the clerk seemed to be in the same difficulty, for he was silent on the subject too; and so Markham quietly adjusted his surplice, followed Christopher into the church, went up the chancel with the most complete self-possession, and to the amazement of all Drellington knelt down,

not right up at the altar, but some distance before it, and facing it.

Whether indignation took possession of those who witnessed this proceeding did not appear from any overt act;—perhaps they wished to see more. The six or seven who were resolved to stand on their rights, and in case of offence to their consciences to walk out of the church, did not do so in this instance, for the very simple reason that they had not as yet walked into it, a duty they never performed until the fashionable moment at the close of the Absolution. At present, therefore, Markham was happily unconscious that he had excited any surprise. Surprise, did I say? *that* he would have excited, under any circumstances, by his undivided attention to the service, which was a rare sight in that place. Not once during the whole time did he turn his head, except when Gubbins took him up a psalm-book, and then Miss Henrietta Gascoigne, who had never taken her eyes off him for a single instant, caught a view of his full face as he moved to receive it, a circumstance which seemed, by her somewhat inattentive demeanour during the service, to afford her much gratification. .

And now the time is come when Markham is in the vestry changing his surplice. Who knows which is the hymn which the singers have got all to themselves? And yet he strangely delays; the second,—third,—and even fourth verse has commenced, and he comes not. Some are half frightened into the idea that scandalised at the graceless conduct of the people he has refused to preach. But here he is, and he wears his hood too over his gown, (another surprise,) yet they are fain to admit that it adds to the dignity of his clerical appearance.

I am not going to speak of the sermon. As a

composition it was far inferior to the gorgeous and somewhat ponderous productions of the vicar ; as a captivating piece of earnest teaching it was as decidedly superior. Markham had one or two rare qualities as a preacher,—a gentle persuasiveness of manner, short pointed diction, a very plain method of illustration, and a sweet though not a weak voice, which he regulated with admirable skill. The church had got the reputation of being a bad one for hearing, as thanks to the galleries and staircases well it might be ; this evening not a word fell short on the ear, and let us hope not on the hearts of the congregation.

His success in the village was complete. Pander, the churchwarden, blundered into the vestry to offer his thanks ; and outside good-natured Mrs. Turnbull poured forth a stream of acknowledgments.

And now happened one event destined to banish most summarily all the dress, attitudes, and teaching of the curate from the heads of Drellington. Markham having bid adieu to Mrs. Turnbull was proceeding homeward up the village street with Pander and George Turnbull, when they passed a group which turned to look as they went forward. Markham no sooner beheld the countenance of one of them, a tallish, very graceful girl, dressed most simply though stylishly, than he bowed. She with a rich crimson blush overspreading her face, which bespoke pleasure mixed with embarrassment, immediately acknowledged the salute. Pander's surprise at this proceeding choked his utterance, and very nearly his respiration, but George at once said, "I was not aware you had any acquaintances in Drellington."

"And I do not think I can call that young lady by such a term," said Markham, perfectly at his ease. "The fact is, she has shown great kindness to my poor sick sister, in making daily inquiries, and

sending her presents of fruit, and in a way too that prevents us expressing our sense of her kindness. Moreover, I met her accidentally for a few moments in the house of one of my parishioners at Callington, so that I could hardly pass her without bowing."

"Brave girl," thought George; and his heart swelled with pride at the thought of conduct which put the rest of the village to shame.

Meanwhile the news spread fast and furious through Drellington, of the rencontre between Ethel Conway and Markham. Virgil describes better than any one ever did the action of a swift report, through a community of his own day, but he would have described it still better if he had been acquainted with an English country town, where the tongues are never very accurate, and are at most times disposed to be venomous. Ethel Conway, the reports ran, had long known the curate,—had met him often, none knew whether by appointment or not,—and had kissed her hand to him before all Drellington,—some said had run after him in the public street. Now though not a soul who propagated all this stuff believed one word of it, for this young lady's character was prized and respected in the place as much as its own, yet it was too good not to tell, and so in much less time than it takes to write it, the most prodigious story reached the ears of Miss Jane Turnbull, who had remained at home during the evening in the rather second-rate company of her own thoughts; and in about a quarter of an hour later the most lively conversation had taken place in the vicarage library between the mother and her three daughters on the subject.

As long as Miss Jenny abused Miss Conway, she had it pretty much her own way, but when, just to vary the point of her invective, she began

to dissect Markham, Fanny, who had been much impressed by the sermon met her with such an outburst of indignation as quite to take away her breath. This was quite a new aspect of affairs, and set Jenny pondering. Mary declared, sagely shaking her head like a youthful female Lord Burleigh, "that she could not,—no, she could not understand it at all;" and Mrs. Turnbull ever and anon addressing imaginary clouds remarked, "that after the vice and temptation she saw daily in the world, she should be surprised at nothing—positively nothing. There was that George Brazier, only the other day the most upright and religious young man in the place, after he had married the young woman of his choice, after the girl's parents had fitted up their house for them with everything—literally everything—necessary to their comfort, he had taken the opportunity of his wife's having gone to Gramford for only two days, to remove everything in the night and go off to America. She did not know—no, she really did not know what the people would do next."

Into what depths of philosophy these considerations would have hurried her there is no knowing, for at this juncture her son George hastily entered the room, crying,

"I say, mother, I've got some news for you. Our reputation here is not quite gone for good manners after all. That trump of a girl, Ethel Conway, although she did not think she ought to call till her aunt was able to go with her, has been sending fruit every day for the last two months to that poor sister of Markham's."

"Pray, George," said Jenny, lighting a flat candlestick in order to beat a hasty retreat, if necessary, "have you ever heard that sisters are capital blinds. Your friend Ethel is no fool."

"Now, Jenny, the furies seize you for a slan-

derous little hypocrite," said her brother in a rage, "no one in the place would have said that but you."

"When young ladies kiss their hands to gentlemen in the open street—"

"Stop, stop," said George, "before you make yourself more ridiculous and cause me to forget myself. I was present, and nothing further took place than a distant bow between the parties. It was Markham told me about the fruit, and he is incapable of falsehood."

"All Jesuits are, of direct falsehood," said his sister, opening the door to retire; "but—"

"No, no! I'll hear no more. He is no Jesuit, and Ethel Conway is a trump, and I'll tell her so to-morrow."

"George," said Jenny, coming again partly into the room, "it is not *your* compliments that will affect Ethel now." And with this last shot, which somehow struck a chord painfully in the young man's breast, she retired, clearly having the best of the battle.

And pray, reader, who is this Ethel Conway?



CHAPTER VI.

ST. ETHEL.

ALL the world knows that Lieut.-General Sir Herbert Conway, K.C.B., after covering himself with glory to the very tips of his fingers, by his exploits in the Peninsular War, retired to vegetate on his reputation, in his patrimony of Nuneham Friars, near Beverley, Yorkshire, at the close of that great struggle. A smaller portion of the world is also acquainted with the fact that the same intrepid veteran, who at the commencement of his campaigns, had left an infant family, with no spirit to speak of, to bewail his absence, found at the conclusion of it, a number of boys and girls full of spirit to lament his return, as he forthwith proceeded to subject them to a discipline, according much more with his veteran experience, than with their adolescent aspirations.

And perhaps, a still smaller fraction of the world only knows, that the gallant warrior packed all his sons out of the house, on various pretexts, as they severally reached the age, at which the law presumes them to be their own masters, from the time of which event he never saw or corresponded with them until the day when they were all assembled in sorrow round his death-bed.

A smaller fraction again only, is aware that on this occasion, he most openly and honourably for-

gave these children for all the wrong they had done him, and that having thereby eased his conscience, he died just as such a Christian, and such a warrior, naturally should die.

He left behind him three sons. Hugh, the eldest, who married late in life, and died a year or two after his marriage, leaving an infant son. Herbert, the second, who also died a few years after his father, but unmarried. And Edward, the youngest, the most beloved by the Peninsular warrior of all his children, but who nevertheless, had early in life incurred his bitterest displeasure.

Edward Conway's disagreement with his father, consisted in his desire to be united with a young lady of high family, but of French origin, and of the Roman Catholic persuasion, which desire he offered to forego, if Sir Herbert objected on religious grounds. Sir Herbert's principles on religion, were perhaps difficult for even himself to define; but as it happened, he would listen to nothing; no excuse—no offer of submission—no promise that all should go on as before—nothing. When the gallant soldier once got himself into a fury, nothing would satisfy him but the complete banishment of the parties who put him into it. Edward Conway, like the rest, was turned out of the house, to be recalled only on the occasion which called the father from them all.

The sequel is what all expected.

He married the Roman Catholic lady, and with *her* fortune joined with some slight property, he had inherited from his mother, bought a farm at Callington, in the parish of Holycross, and distant about six furlongs from Drellington. Here he passed eight months of such happiness as these occasions in man's existence on earth only afford.

At the conclusion of that period, his wife died in giving birth to a daughter.

That daughter is the Ethel Conway of this history. Something must be also said of the three daughters of Sir Herbert Conway. Johanna, the eldest, married a General officer in the army, named Wilford, to please her father, and was early left a widow, with one cripple boy. Juliana, the second, married Sir John Nelthorpe, Member for the immaculate borough of Cleannummout, who, devoted to London and its comforts, passed his life therein during the parliamentary session, and after the close thereof, flew with his wife and family, to the well-known baths of Wasserschlöss, in Germany, under the impression that his system was disarranged by over-application to his senatorial duties, a state of physical disorganization, which he proceeded to cure in that seductive watering place, by copious potations of saline-feruginous-sulphuric-magnesia-and-something-else-water, properly corrected by gorgeous dinners, cooked after the fashion of the *German cuisine* ! And lastly, Georgina, married to Lieut.-Colonel Charles Wreford of the Guards, of Newlands Park, Drellington, and M.P. for Gramford, in the county of Northampton. With Lady Nelthorpe, this history has very little to do. But from Aunt Wilford, and Aunt Wreford, Ethel Conway's story is inseparable, as will in the later chapters of her very simple annals, more fully appear.

A strange, ascetic, desponding, kind of man was Edward Conway, brooding over one fancied distress, which he fondled, and petted, and hugged, till it became the "bête noir" of his existence. Never communicative in early life, never making friends, he seemed more destined by nature to be a hermit, than to have any occupation requiring contact with a bustling world. Cold and impassive externally, though with naturally warm feelings, he would not have made a bad priest, had he adopted.

the Romanist persuasion. And yet (so little do appearances in this life evidence fact,) it was his connection with this very persuasion in the person of his wife, that embittered the whole of his later days.

In boyhood he had been imbued by his mother's teaching, (she was a presbyterian of the strict Calvinist school,) with the most extravagant ideas of Roman Catholic iniquity. Of a narrow understanding, though with a sensitive heart, these impressions took deep root. No idea of the changes wrought by time or civilization, could make him look on that church as different from what it was in the days of Alva and Philip the Second. Ignorant, bloody, and grasping, he believed it had always been, and was now, and would ever continue. And though Lady Conway was somewhat annoyed, that the General *would* educate his children in the principles of the Established Church, and he had an unpleasant way of seeing his commands obeyed, she had no reason to think ill of her exertions on this particular soil; for indeed, it produced as flourishing a crop of prejudices as ever she could desire, and with them here and there, a goodly bunch of apprehensions, suspicions, and groundless forebodings. There is no lesson more evident in God's working in the world, than that at every moment, and on the slightest occasion, "He chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." In Edward Conway's case, this lesson might have struck the veriest baby in the philosophy of life. He had been educated on the principles of schism. Prejudice was the key he had been taught to apply to the door of religious knowledge, and yet the person destined to call out every feeling of tenderness in his heart, was a young girl of the very persuasion, which he believed, held the monopoly of the gates of perdition. What made

it more extraordinary was, that she held the strictest views in that particular form of religion, and yet if ever virtue in speaking and doing, in outward semblance, and outward acting, adorned the female character, so far as human experience, and human intelligence could judge, it shone forth in her. That a man of such views as Conway, did not consider religious differences an insuperable bar to their union, may at first sight appear strange. But it must be remembered that he was in love, and if religious fanaticism makes a man extravagant, the tender passion sometimes makes him more so. He entertained the grand scheme of converting her, and absolutely suggested this idea to his father, as the most meritorious end to his matrimonial project. The probability is that she would have converted him; for ignorance, and in religious matters no man was ever more really ignorant than he, affords the very best ground for Romanist propagandism to work on; but as we know she died before the event had declared itself either way; and a few years later his father died also.

And now commenced that gnawing at the heart, that ever growing dread which ceased not to haunt the remainder of his existence. Edward Conway, educated as he had been, for he prided himself on the purity of his religious principles, had broken one of the great fundamental laws of his faith. He had disobeyed one parent in marrying against his will, and the other in marrying in the face of her religious instruction. He was moreover, under an idea that his conduct had killed his mother, a mistake on his part, which his father had encouraged, with the malicious hope of wounding his religious sensibility. So here was another ground of remorse. And finally, he had offended his God, in gratifying his own passions at the expense of

his religious convictions. Most people would have thought that the sense of the wrong done to the one parent, would have been obliterated by the death-bed forgiveness accorded to all his sons by the merciful and gallant veteran ; but Edward Conway's mind was of that gloomy cast that takes an impression, but has not the power afterwards of discarding it. He had done the wrong, and awaited the punishment in one continual life of fretful foreboding. God would visit the fault of the father on the child. Ethel his darling, the star that lighted his earthly course, would fall, pure as she was now, fall through the Roman portals which to his weak mind, led to eternal destruction !

Truth is, that there did seem some probability of her one day espousing the persuasion in which her mother lived and died. The little girl, with that busy inquiring mind, which sometimes startles us in children of tender age, had early made herself acquainted with a few very tangible facts, which she never let go, and which subsequently made a sturdy resistance to the action of her father's teaching. First she knew her mother had died a Roman Catholic. Secondly, her father had several times told her that her mother was a saint in heaven, a belief somewhat antagonistic with his faith. Thirdly, he was continually expressing his delight at the resemblance between the two, and his hope that she would grow up like her other parent.

To counteract, however, any danger of his apprehensions being realised, at least as far as he could obviate them, Edward Conway set himself seriously to work. Everything that she was to learn, she should learn from himself in person. She was no loser by this in some respects, for Edward Conway was an accomplished scholar, had spent a studious life, and was heart and soul in his pupil ; and

Ethel was a most apt little learner, with her life as it were, bound up in the parent that was left her, who never seemed to have a thought except for herself. You may be sure she was soon duly instructed about the inquisition and the Duke of Alva, and other notables of the same class; but somehow or other the lessons she received on these subjects were not so effective as those on others, for she never could get out of her head that these people were of the same religion as her mother, and her mother was a saint in Heaven. When her father received the same lessons from his mother, there never was a thought or an impulse in his nature to counteract their working. With Ethel this was not so: the leading principle in her mind was the goodness of the parent who had gone, and what lessons she would have taught her had she been left. And so, for hours together, she would think of the beauties of those old cathedrals, of which she had read in books (which nobody knew she had or whence she got them,) and wonder why one could not pray to the great God as well therein as in stupid, dirty Drellington Church, the worship in which her father held up as a model of Christian purity, till she gave up the matter with a hopeless sigh, or until her mind became a confused jumble of white vestments, organ peals, bones of martyrs, and other detrimental phantasies. I do not pretend to explain it, but the fact is so, that little Ethel, the little saint, as she was called in Callington, had not a digestion strong enough for the religious doses her father gave her. She received them with reverence and affection for the teacher, but her heart loathed them, and probably she never received them into that receptacle at all.

Among other fears which never ceased to distract him, Edward Conway had a continual dread that his child would pick up among playmates

some information which would act as an antidote to all his care. To meet this difficulty on the outset, he wisely resolved to give her none; that is, none among the children of the vicinage. But as he was not such a fool as to think she would live without making herself a confidante somehow; and as he preferred that the confidante should be of his own choosing, he planned and brought to maturity the following scheme. When Ethel was about five years old, a former dependent of his family, who had been nearly ruined by his father, for some offence which was mixed up with his (Edward Conway's) marriage, died in almost penury, leaving a little girl about a year junior to his own child. This little girl Edward Conway resolved to bring up with Ethel, and to provide for in such a way, that in no future day could she come to want; and to make matters right, he commenced teaching her precisely the same lessons which he had already taught his own child; and laughable enough as it may seem, Ethel helped him in the process, with great gravity superintending the same lessons with which she had been crammed, and which she had not as yet been able to lay to heart.

The child's real name was Lizzy Miller, but she never was called by that name by either of her new friends. She was a fresh little thing with sunny brown hair, large lustrous eyes, and one of those artless rosy faces, which one never sees elsewhere than in England. Her smile was guilelessness itself. Edward Conway used to say that the down on her cheek reminded him of the rich delicacy of a purple heartsease, not in colour of course, but in that rich velvety softness peculiar to it, and so she early received the nickname of Pansy, by which name we shall henceforth call her. A beautiful contrast to her young mistress (or patroness, or foster-sister, for I cannot define the exact relation in which the

two stood) did she present. Her rich fresh colour would look so bright against the paler sadness of Ethel's more classic beauty, as the two galloped on their ponies in the fresh evenings over Uppershot Common, with Edward Conway some little distance behind, on a heavy hackney, moving grimly after them in a swinging, dignified trot; and then they would stop, and Pansy would call attention to some spot on the landscape,—perhaps a flock of sheep, or a clump of trees, or the spire of Holycross Church; while Ethel's large deep eyes would rest on the towers of Gramford Minster, and she would think on the surpliced choristers she knew were singing within those holy walls, and a picture of the Blessed SAVIOUR which remained there still, despite the grumbling of some folk, and would say to herself, "That is not Roman Catholic,—why will not papa take me there?" But she had never asked him; she had feared to distress him, and she was twelve years old now. Truth is, that Ethel felt a great void in her heart when praying to her heavenly FATHER; she missed something, she did not know what; perhaps it was the ordinances of the Church, perhaps it was something her sainted mother could have supplied. She was simple enough, and simplicity in her requirements was, no doubt, acceptable to Him; but in her mind He was the GOD that appeared in the burning bush, in the pillar and the cloud, and in thunderings on Mount Sinai; could she not then approach Him, and feel His presence in the "beauty of holiness," in pealing anthems, and choral offerings, as her mother had done, and yet be of the English Church? Was the base spirituality of Drellington a sample of the prayer and thanksgiving that is due from this smiling land of plenty?

From what has been said, it may be gathered that Ethel had little flow of animal spirits; but it

must not be supposed for that reason, that she was devoid of cheerfulness. Her manner to the last few days of her short career rather exhibited a serenity than sadness; and when the one difficulty which hung upon her mind had been removed, she might be said to have assumed a certain sort of gaiety. But still the manner was always a quiet manner. With Pansy she was more her natural self than with any other. Pansy was the happy receptacle of all her thoughts, doubts, and hopes. If Pansy could not originate anything to relieve them, she was an excellent listener; and who of us is there who in some part of our lives has not experienced the value of this?

Moreover, she worshipped Ethel, and so the two went on, thoroughly opposite in disposition and thoughts, happy in each other's excellencies. One other consolation Ethel certainly had. Edward Conway was well off in the world, for the deceased warrior, his father, had left all his children tolerably provided for, and Herbert on his death had bequeathed him his fortune, and with his wife, as has been seen, he took some little besides. He was an open-handed man, and gave freely in charity; but ever true to the darling object of his life, he never missed an opportunity of making his child the channel of his bounty in whatever instance it was conferred. And so Ethel went amongst the poor and sick, at first with him, and afterwards with Pansy, and sometimes alone, dispensing assistance where it was needed, though it is a question whether the recipients ever valued the assistance itself so much as the winning, compassionate look and smile which accompanied it. And so she got the name of St. Ethel; for there was a well not far off called St. Ethel's well, and supposed to have been often visited centuries ago by the Saxon Saint, Etheldreda, and the old women of the place

said she had now returned to the world in the form of her youth to visit the old loved spot. Well might she be called a saint. Who is there that remembers the small delicately cut features, the neatly pencilled eyebrow, the luxuriant brown hair struggling rebelliously against the dark-coloured ribbons that confined it, and the heavenly blue of those eyes, that did not sometimes in his heart think so too?

Two years passed on, and the young heart was to know the bereavement of her other parent. Edward Conway did not die of any disease that I know of; he rather went out of the world in that old-fashioned way which we read of in school-histories: "When he felt his end approaching, he summoned his family to his bedside," &c. In the present instance he sent for Ethel, and then and there told her the mental struggle of his life. On her the effect was magical: in an instant all that had appeared dark and incomprehensible was explained; her father had been all his life a bigot: the Roman Catholic religion had been a mere bugbear, a phantom which he had conjured up, as a punishment in her person for his misdeeds. Even in the midst of all her sorrow the conviction afforded her inexpressible relief. Her mother's persuasion, as far as its integrity was concerned, stood cleared in her sight, and whichever might be right, the idea of perdition being the lot of its votaries, vanished in a moment from her thoughts. For all his suffering, however, her heart was most bowed down; and as she pressed her small hands together at the recital, and her heart contracted within her bosom, as if from some corresponding pressure, she vowed that come what would, she would never so belie his fostering care as to do that which it had been the object of his life to prevent: nothing ever should make her a member of the Church so obnox-

ious in his eyes, or induce her to disobey even the wish of a parent which to her now was more sacred than a command. And so she told him, smoothing his dying pillow the while, and affording the poor weak man more consolation in those last fleeting hours than he had known his whole life long. And his eyes too at this period seemed somewhat opened, for he dimly began to comprehend that it were better to have left that young mind to its own working, than to have attempted to fill it with prejudices, of which, from its very nature, it could not even receive the impression: with one stroke of his pen, as it were, in a short codicil, he revoked all the restrictions of a long cunningly drawn will, and left his child a fortune of some twenty thousand pounds, unshackled by one single condition. Colonel Wreford became her guardian and sole trustee of her property, and in her education and care were joined with him her two aunts. Ethel now as she and Pansy wept their joint bereavement, first comprehended her father's character, though she had lived all her life more intimately with him than children generally do with their male parent—first offered her simple homage for all his love to her, and knew his value and his loss only at the same moment.

And now a council of war was held between the two sisters and the guardian as to her future disposal. Mrs. Wreford, who in her sole person seemed to have inherited the whole common sense, which should in all fairness have been distributed equally among her brothers and sisters, had rapidly appreciated the mischief of her brother Edward's conduct. To her eyes, his teaching had tended but to produce the mischief which he most dreaded, and the best plan, she thought, to keep Ethel in the right path, was never to tease her about the wrong. Let her go and see all this mummery in a

Romish church, and her common sense would set her right. Colonel Wreford, however, who was a member of the British Parliament, and who felt the terrible results to his position if his niece were to become a Roman-Catholic, (he knew too well the way in which the No Popery cry had been prostituted for all kinds of political purposes in English History,) thought that this would be carrying the matter to the other extreme, and proposed a middle course. Ethel should be watched, but left to herself; everything that she did during her father's lifetime, she should be permitted to do now; the money she was in the custom of distributing to the poor, with his sanction, should be at her disposal, as heretofore. "Let no change of conduct on our part make her regret her loss." And it was her father's dying wish that in all things she was to have her own way, as far as consisted with common prudence. For the present she was to go to her aunt, Mrs. Wilford, at the Hermitage, (a nice square red-brick modern building, of course, or it would not have borne that name,) as Mrs. Wreford was about to have an addition to her family, but later, if she desired it, she was to come to Newlands.

And so Ethel and Pansy lived at the Hermitage, and the two nursed and amused the cripple boy. Ethel came and went where she pleased—now among the poor at Callington—now superintending tame pheasants at Newlands—now, again, at the Hermitage; ever tranquil, serene, contented for the time about the religious question, though Gramford Minster would still sometimes recur to her thoughts, as to whether the persuasion in which she was brought up might not be something other than the Drellington faith. However, none other than Drellington did she ever know. She was Confirmed at Drellington, after sadly trying the Vicar's patience by the questions she put to him during the

preparation for that ordinance ; and thus tranquilly did she pass her existence till she was twenty-one years old, with the same yearning for something as yet unattained in her worship to God, but in other respects without a sorrowful thought to disturb her.

Only on one occasion did she leave home. After her Confirmation, Mrs. Wreford had taken her under her own charge at Newlands, and was so impressed with the treasure she possessed there, and the dread that the simplicity of her character, and her utter ignorance of the little world of her own age, might be prejudicial to her by and by, that she pressed upon her a visit to her aunt and cousins in town, as it might amuse her and present new scenes to her mind : for Lady Nelthorpe lived in the "grand monde," besides other unforeseen advantages.

The result was widely different to what she had expected. Ethel went, but was miserable there. She yearned for Pansy, who did not go with her. She did not in the least enter into her cousins' pleasures, who, in their turn voted her a fool,—as no doubt she was, to them ; and she, again, did not think much better of her aunt Nelthorpe, who, it must be allowed, was just able to comprehend the ordinary circumstances of existence, and no more. So the visit, which was planned for three months, ended in a fortnight, and Ethel returned to Pansy, Newlands, and felicity.

While, however, she was in town, she went to church, but there was no hope there. It was a fashionable edifice, where a man preached an hour and a half, and which, though it excelled Drellington in cleanliness, resembled it very much in everything else. Lady Nelthorpe, too, who had been educated by her mother, delighted in everything that smacked of the conventicle, and but for her husband's position as representative of a Church of

England borough, would have frequented some popular meeting-house.

And this brings the young lady down to within three months of the commencement of this history, before we pursue which, it may be as well to say something of her personal attractions.

It is a difficult thing, undoubtedly, to describe a beauty, and yet I should be ashamed of myself, and unworthy of my heroine, if I did not try, even if I subject myself to the charge of hyperbole: so here goes—

Ethel Conway, then, at the age of twenty-one, was above the middle height, very slight, but not thin. Her head and features were small, and all three partook of a girlishness which made her look little more than seventeen, even then; an effect which resulted, probably, from the nature of her education, and her country life. Her tint was pale, displaying very little colour at any time, and only when excited, but the skin exquisitely delicate. Her hair, which was very abundant, and of a very dark brown colour, was drawn simply off her face and slantingly over the ears, and secured by some coloured braid interlaced within it behind. Her mouth was small. She never smiled, but had a way of opening it for a low, musical half-laugh, which just displayed a set of small, beautiful white teeth. But the feature of features which made her more surpassingly lovely than anything I ever saw or dreamt of, was those eyes. I have somewhere before called them blue, but they were not blue—they were of that deep purple, which, when you look into them, seem unfathomable—resembling the richest sapphires, only of a brightness subdued to the softest persuasion, and fringed by long deep brown eyelashes. To look in them was to love her, for they were capable of every varying emotion telling the gentle soul—the warm, loving,

and compassionate heart which lurked beneath them.

Such was Ethel Conway, reader, at the commencement of my tale; and as she had twenty thousand pounds into the bargain, you will agree with me that in such a locality she was a person of considerable importance.



CHAPTER VII.

ETHEL AND EVA.

THE Reverend Thompson Beaumont's disgrace was the topic of conversation in the Drellington circle, and you may suppose how variously it affected the feelings of the parishioners. In Ethel's mind it excited only compassion, for she had heard that he had suffered much sorrow and distress not many years before, and when this emotion once took possession of the young lady's heart it left no room for any other more severe. The Bishop's words respecting the new comer too were widely canvassed;—who would he be? young, old, a bachelor, or what not? In Ethel's mind the simple question was—would he do his duty? And then rose Gramford Minster before her eyes; as it often did, though not so despairingly as heretofore.

It must not be supposed that these matters concerned the Drellington public in the least. Holy-cross had nothing in common with them; the families that lived nearest to it were not, properly speaking, in the Drellington but rather in the Gramford visiting circle. Still it was county chit-chat, and all the world knows the felicity of county chit-chat to a few village magnates; yet a pause ensued of nearly a month,—Drellington did not even know that the new curate had arrived, for Markham had made his presence known among his

flock only by his unassuming labours and solicitous care for their welfare, without extending the circle of his information. The announcement was conveyed to Drellington in the awful fact that the Bishop had chosen a "Tractarian." The excitement in the village was extreme, for the place was dreadfully hard up for news.

Tractarian! Ethel had heard that word before; what did it mean? she would ask Aunt Wreford. Aunt Wreford said she did not know. She believed it was a sect instituted for the purpose of bringing popish practices into the Church; but "you know, my dear, we are the last people in the world to stand that sort of thing here." Jane Turnbull, who was making a morning call at Newlands, said, that "the Tractarians were Jesuits in disguise; and that their mission was to carry us all over to Rome." Ethel was silent, but when Jane had gone she returned to the charge, "then the Tractarians were outwardly of the same persuasion as ourselves?"

"Why, yes—that is, not exactly," said her aunt. "It is outward superstitious forms that they want to introduce. But why are you so curious, Ethel?"

"Because, aunt, if they are of the Church of England, like ourselves, and if the Bishop promised to appoint a tried and good man to Holycross, I think there can be no harm in my going to see what he does."

She said this hesitatingly, for Gramford Minster was again before her eyes.

"Don't think of such a thing, my dear," cried Lady Nelthorpe, who was spending a fortnight with her sister. "The Tractarians are horrors—Antichrist—in my belief. Sir George wanted me to have one for a tutor to little Reginald. I would not hear of it. Sir George said he should only teach him Greek. My love, I said, you don't know

what he won't teach him. Tractarian, said I to Mr. Lang our solicitor, if he brings him into this house, mind, Mr. Lang, I break my settlements."

What Lady Nelthorpe meant by this dreadful threat I cannot say, but perhaps Sir George Nelthorpe knew, for he did not persist in the obnoxious step. Ethel certainly did not; the idea in her mind was that of the fracture of a very stale ship biscuit by some violent process. On the main question, however, she had made up her mind, as she was now a woman, and she surveyed her erect graceful figure in the glass with one of those half laughs of hers, and resolved to judge for herself.

And so one fine Wednesday evening in May did she and Pansy, with a couple of thick veils in their hands to wear in church, for they were not inclined to tell every one what they were about, take their way across the park, and leaving Callington on their left, traverse the meadows below Uppershot Common till a pleasant walk of rather more than half an hour brought them to Holycross. Ethel looked handsomer than ever, for her face was beaming with an animation very foreign to it, and Pansy was in ecstasy to see her so full of spirits.

As they drew near to the village, however, the expressive face gave way to the old serene one of thought, more hopeful perhaps, for the remembrance of that one long yearning dream was upon her, coupled with the idea that without offending her father's memory there might be some compromise wherewith to satisfy her "thirst for the living God." Could it be, that happy flourishing England, with its prosperity, its plenty, and that smiling happiness, a sample of which now met her at every turn, knew but one way of glorifying its Maker, and that way after the godless careless fashion of Drellington? What if she were destined to be disappointed? It could not be; she had heard from

her old friends in Callington that the new curate was indeed no ordinary man ; that he never seemed to rest ; that morning, night—fair weather or foul, he was with his flock teaching, praying, comforting, encouraging ; and that his delicate sister was like him, straining all her weak faculties in the same path. No ! something told her that this time she was to find what she had sought for so long, and the sweet face looked up to the blue tranquil sky above with that pure faith which never looks in vain.

With a heart so prepared Ethel and her companion entered Holycross church. They need not have been embarrassed, for they were not the only strangers there, and little notice was taken of them. I have mentioned before that the church had lately been restored after the primitive style, and was one of the gems of the neighbourhood. Many there were who came from Gramford especially to see it, and since the new curate came, and the nature of his exertions was known, visitors often chose Wednesday evenings for the excursion, in order to join in the service at the same time. Ethel and Pansy therefore attracted little attention, for the church was tolerably full. But from the moment she entered the conviction seized her, that she had never attended Divine service before. It was no particular ceremony or form that struck her, it was the general earnestness of the congregation, from the officiating clergyman to the lowest charity boy, which told her this ; there was no bawling clerk to disturb the decorum of the service ; every one in the place joined in the responses, and when at the commencement of the first psalm the children in admirable tune and time broke out into one of those splendid old Gregorian tones, it was as much as she could do to prevent herself from bursting into tears. Then, too, there were the clear tones of Eva Mark-

ham's voice leading them.—Oh ! how she followed her, heart and soul, in the words, "My soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my SAVIOUR."

Markham's sermon, delivered on this occasion, was exceedingly simple, being addressed to his poorer parishioners, and was directed to explain to them the teaching of the particular season of the Church, inculcated by the lessons of the previous Sunday, in relation to the whole chain of teaching during the year. From this, for the first time Ethel learnt that not a lesson of any day, or collect, or an Epistle or Gospel, has been chosen by the Church, without reference to some such view as this ; and though in this particular instance the information derived from the sermon was elementary enough, yet she was made aware, now only, of the vast field of spiritual information that is locked up in the Church's teaching,—tame, and dull, and meaningless, as it had seemed at Drelington hitherto.

It was dusk when they emerged into open air, and Ethel could not help hanging about the spot to get a look at Eva ; that gentle songstress who was so favoured in the knowledge of all those glories which had been denied so long to her. Eva she must know ; she had heard in Callington that she was often ill, often unable to move for days.—Know her she must, that superior being, far superior to her, saint as she was called, who could unfold to her so many of the springs of the fountain of life.

Afterwards as they walked home she seemed in a dream. Once she asked Pansy what she thought of the Tractarian ? but Pansy only answered that she thought he was very nice looking ; at which Ethel said, "Oh ! I did not mean that, you silly girl," and relapsed again into silence. Her head seemed

to be running on the words of the psalm they had heard said this evening, which she somehow fancied applied to the yearnings of her own heart.

Gramford Minster was no more to cause doubt to that inquiring mind, the grand question had been answered, the mystery revealed, Drellington worship after all was not the worship of the Church of England.

The grand object of her life was now to get hold of Eva; Aunt Georgy, as she called Mrs. Wreford, when she wanted to get her to bestir herself, must call on Eva. The morning ensuing on the Wednesday night she told her what she had done, and what she had heard, and how divinely Eva sung,—she knew Aunt Georgy was wild about good singing. Mrs. Wreford, whose mind had been long set at rest about Ethel's Roman Catholic tendencies, did not seem to think she had done any harm; indeed herself, once or twice lately, she had begun to think Drellington church rather disreputable; she promised therefore to call with her at Holy-cross when Lady Nelthorpe had gone. But Lady Nelthorpe did not go as soon as she intended, so that caused some delay. Again, it happened that Lady Nelthorpe had brought her two boys down to Newlands for country air, after their recovery from the scarlet fever, and although their recovery had been quite complete before they left London, Mrs. Wreford would have just that one room papered and that staircase painted, and a corridor whitewashed, before she could think of letting that poor sick girl cross her threshold. And so the time slipped away, until the Sunday, when we have seen, Markham preached at Drellington, and the promised call had not taken place.

Meanwhile Ethel was determined to let Eva know of her existence; the choicest fruit, which her uncle's hothouses produced, furnished a present for Holy-

cross at least three times a week: pheasants' eggs, cream cheeses, early peas, and I don't know what else found their way to Eva, with sometimes a line on paper, sometimes a sympathizing message by word of mouth. Markham and his sister were sorely puzzled in what way to acknowledge all this kindness; had any of these good things been sent in Mrs. Wreford's name he would have called, or left a card, but besides that they were not, the incomprehensible behaviour of every family in Drellington towards his sister made him hesitate the more before he took this step. Meantime now and then a verbal message was returned, or a line sent in Eva's handwriting, after the same fashion as Ethel's notes, such as—"Miss Markham's thanks to Miss Conway, and is stronger to-day, but she cannot think what she has done to deserve all her kindness." Eva on her side yearned very much for Ethel's acquaintance. Young ladies little think, although they must be well aware of the fact, how lonely a girl is without the society of one of her own sex, and thus that an intimacy, even though it be of the most hollow description, with a female, is almost a necessary adjunct to her existence. Again and again, through the long day, when her brother was at work in the parish, and when the ailing girl was too listless to even amuse herself, would she say aloud, "Oh! when will Ethel come and see me?" But alas! the days wore on, and Eva grew no stronger, and yet no Ethel came.

But Edgar Markham had preached at Drellington, and Mrs. Wreford had been present when that bow passed between him and her niece, which we have seen caused such a tremendous sensation at the vicarage, and being made at the same time aware of Ethel's almost daily presents at Holycross, she began to think she had been somewhat remiss. So judging too that now Edgar was known to

Drellington, the whole place would be after him, and that it was as well for her not to be the last, she said to her niece that evening, with much amiability, "Ethel, dear! I am afraid I can't go to-morrow myself, but do you in the morning take the carriage and go and bring Miss Markham here for the day; otherwise she will be smothered by those Turnbull girls, or by that great romping Miss Gascoigne—quite a shame for such a delicate little plant as you say she is."

"But suppose, aunt, she won't come?"

"I never knew Ethel ask in vain," said her aunt.

"I'll do what I can," said Ethel, her great blue eyes flashing with a delight they seldom expressed; "but what am I to say to her brother if I see him?"

"Ask him to come to dinner and fetch her home afterwards;—or stay, it would be better for her to be here a week to avoid that crowd: but that painting not being finished is a difficulty, I am not quite at ease about that."

"Oh! aunt, I am sure she won't stay away from her brother."

"You seem to know a great deal about her, though you have never spoken to her," said Mrs. Wreford; "but do just as you think best. I spoil you much more than I do my own children," she continued, fondly patting the little hand which lay in hers during the whole of this conversation.

Thus it was that at about eleven o'clock on the following morning, Eva was lying on her sofa in the little drawing-room of Holycross Parsonage, thoroughly knocked up by yesterday's labours, when she heard a carriage drive swiftly up to the door. This was a rare occurrence, for nobody ever called upon her but Lady Tramontane, who al-

ways arrived at a most sober amble, and it caused her at once to get up and look anxiously at the door. She half thought that it might be at last—yes it was—the door opened, and unannounced stood close to her the long-expected visitor. The greeting was characteristic.

“Ethel!”

“Miss Markham!” was all that passed; and the two stood looking at each other in silent wonder and admiration. And well they might. Two fairer specimens of God’s work rarely stood together on the globe;—fair, not so much in their earthly beauty, as in the heavenly graces of that baptismal innocence which they seemed not yet to have lost.

It was a rare sight. Eva had never seen Ethel, but knew her by her eyes! Ethel had seen Eva only in the dusk, but knew her by her voice. And so they stood looking. At last Eva said, “How long you have been!”

“You will not believe it was my fault?” said Ethel inquiringly: “there were many reasons, but none were of my making.”

“I am certain of it,” said Eva; “but come, sit down.”

“How pretty you’ve made this room look,” said Ethel in admiration. “You make your presence known even in dead things.”

Eva laughed. “Have you come to pay me compliments? I am very vain as it is, and my brother makes me vainer.”

“No, I have not,” replied the other. “I have come to ask you to make me like you,—to teach me all you know yourself. Oh! Miss Markham, how happy you are to be so good, and I have been so long in darkness!”

“St. Ethel long in darkness!”

“Oh, saint no longer, Miss Markham! for years

I have had no rest. I have never been to church, I have never known God."

"Never been to church!" said Eva in dismay.

"Never to what I call church, until I was here one night in Holycross. But I will tell you all about it by-and-by; you will tell me all you know. I have so much to ask."

And the two sat hand in hand still looking at each other, still finding more to gaze on.

"But you must come now with me to Newlands."

"To-day? No! I can't: think, I don't even know your aunt yet; it would be premature."

"But she wishes it, and there is a nice breeze blowing, come and see." Going to the window: "Why how beautifully you keep your garden, I was going to offer to send over some one to put it to rights for you; but this is charming."

"My brother has great taste in these matters," said Eva.

Ethel looked at her as she said this; there was so much feeling expressed in it.

"You love your brother dearly, Miss Markham."

"Alas! I sometimes fear too much," was the mournful reply.

"There is nothing wrong in that."

"All idolatry is wrong," said Eva in a low voice. "It is my sin, alas! I have never loved without it."

This was said in a tone of such inexpressible sadness, that Ethel tried a laughing rejoinder.

"Well you must try and love me without any risk of idolatry, for I am only afraid you will not love me enough."

Eva smiled, and said, "I am very stupid, am I not? You did not expect a doleful friend."

"Come to Newlands, and we'll talk about it."

But Eva resisted. She said she was fatigued, that her head always ached so on a Monday, that—

in short, a hundred excuses. But as Mrs. Wreford said, "When did Ethel ever plead in vain?" and in half an hour the two girls were driving through the shady lanes of Callington, which road they had chosen at Eva's express desire, as she knew it would please the poor people to see her in company with their pride—St. Ethel.

Many folk, who have not made the poor their study, are apt to think that the active benevolence of money or food given, is what they only look for. Never was there a greater error. You may give, and give, and give, reader, and they may know from whom the bounty comes; but if they do not see you, they will be less grateful to you than to him who is always with them, showing himself the sharer of their sorrows in presence, conversation, and sympathy, even if he give nothing at all.

When Edgar came home in the afternoon, he found a note explaining the events of the morning; but on consideration, he thought it better to give up dining there for this time, and to take the pony gig over for his sister later. "They will be more likely to be kind to her," he said musingly, "the less they see of me."

It is an uncommonly agreeable thing for a man, after a hard day's work, to meet three or four gentle faces all smiling a welcome to him. On entering the drawing-room at Newlands about eight o'clock the same evening, the still handsome features of Mrs. Wreford, the comely young countenance of Angelica Wreford, her daughter, a fine girl of fourteen, and the beaming looks of Eva and Ethel, had a very agreeable effect.

"So you would not dine with us, Mr. Markham," said Mrs. Wreford.

Markham murmured some unintelligible excuse.

"I did not know that Clergymen could invent excuses."

"That is too bad," said he. "My excuse may not be a sufficient one in your eyes, but I can assure you it was a valid one in mine."

"As it is," continued the lady, "I think it will be better for your sister to remain where she is for a week, instead of being pestered in her state of health at home."

But Eva looked so wretched at this, that the project was not entertained for more than a moment.

"Well, if you must go, my dear, I'll order the carriage for you." Here, again, opposition was made. Edgar would take her home in the basket-cart, the pride of Morlington when he bought it. "What, take your sister home in that break-neck thing!" She would not hear of it. So in the carriage they were to go.

While Eva was absent putting on her bonnet, Mrs. Wreford said, "I have not lost sight of your interests this morning, Mr. Markham; for the Vicar intended to sacrifice you to a Drellington dinner-party, of which I was sure you would not approve: so you will be let off with a tea-party. Did I do right?"

"Indeed you did, and I am most grateful. I found the invitation on my table when I got home—it is for Thursday," said Markham.

"What! have they been so quick? Then Mrs. Turnbull has called already?"

"My servant said, 'Mrs. Turnbull and Miss Fanny Turnbull.'"

Mrs. Wreford could not help smiling. "That was not like Mrs. Turnbull's ordinary care," she thought, as she glanced at the Curate's good looks, "and her fears for her pretty daughter."

"Has anybody else called on you to-day?"

"Mrs. Gascoigne and two daughters," was the reply.

Mrs. Wreford was satisfied. Her foresight had just saved Eva from the two greatest inflictions which could befall her.

* * * * *

The same evening, as they were parting for the night, Mrs. Wreford said to her niece, "That girl idolises her brother."

"Can you wonder at it?" said Ethel.

Her aunt looked at her in astonishment as the blood came tingling to the young girl's face.

After a pause, Ethel said, "You don't think, Aunt Georgy, that I—indeed, it was a slip of the tongue. I did not mean what I said. I meant that, so gifted as they both are, do you wonder at their being bound up in each other?"

Mrs. Wreford kissed her, and was satisfied. Ethel had never told her an untruth.

As Ethel, an hour later, in her bedroom, threw her long hair back over her shoulders, preparatory to arranging it for the night, and caught the sight of her own lovely countenance in the glass, she said softly, with her low, musical laugh, "Well, it was a silly thing to say."



CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOIREE AT THE VICARAGE.

It will be hardly necessary for me to state after the events detailed in the last chapter, that Eva and Ethel became inseparable. The following morning the latter accompanied by Pansy was over at Holycross planning amusement to divert the delicate girl, or scheming to relieve her of some at least of the little duties which, as the parson's sister, necessarily devolved upon her. Every Sunday morning Ethel and Pansy would come over to take the schools if Eva felt ailing, and so contagious was her enthusiasm on behalf of her new friend, that Mrs. Wreford was even induced to attend next Wednesday evening's service, which she did, much to her own enlightenment and the subsequent detriment of her habitual attendance in Drellington Parish Church. The real aim of all Ethel's attention, of course beside the fondness she really felt for her, was to be taught her duty, as the Church's daughter, at the hand of her who alone of all her sex seemed to know it, and in the few months that elapsed between this time and that one sad event which is soon to be recorded, she drank in those divine lessons for which all her young life had yearned. Eva was indeed no common instructress, the mild and gentle manner which illustrated in itself every pure thought that

she uttered would have softened the most hardened heart, while on Ethel's ever inquiring, treasuring, and reflecting, it fell as the good seed that brings forth the great and plenteous crop. Markham when told by his sister of Ethel's story, and her wants, soon found books for her to devour, and these she would read and read, in surprise and joy ever increasing, when Eva slept in her little drawing room, as alas! she often did now, or under some shady oak at Newlands, whither Ethel would have a small sofa conveyed for her, and while Pansy would watch to brush the flies from teasing or disturbing her slumber.

But all this is somewhat premature. At present we have to do with the gathering at Drellington Vicarage, which was intended by its head as a mark of acknowledgment for Markham's assistance on that particular Sunday evening, and it is fair to the Vicar to say that he was grateful; indeed he had more than one ground for gratification. Markham had delighted the whole place; on his return home from Gramford that evening the Vicar had some qualms of conscience and digestion as to whether he would not be met by the news of something unpleasant at the domestic threshold, but the accounts of George, his wife, and Fanny, almost gave him a fresh appetite.—Jane had gone to bed. To be sure on the following morning the despatching of the matutinal crumpet was somewhat disturbed by a battle royal between Jane on one side, and George and Fanny on the other. But the Vicar knew his daughter Jane's foibles, and congratulated himself not the less with the fact that Markham had suited the Drellington stomach remarkably well, than that for the relief of his own labours he might with safety be prescribed again.

Another reason why he was pleased was this. He had for a considerable time felt somewhat

ashamed at the manner in which he had treated the new comer. Markham was a protégé of the Earl of Tramontane,—was spoken of in high terms in Gramford circles, and yet he, the Vicar, his near neighbour, had never entertained him at his house. This was a sad slur on a man whose reputation consists solely in the excellence of the dinners he gives. But what could he do? If his house was made too hot to hold him he felt he should die in a month. His wife always addressing the clouds and talking at him; his daughter Jane hitting at him, her parent, morning and night, with insinuations about his duty, perhaps a kind neighbour or two condoling with them in his presence; all this the Vicar could not even calculate his powers of enduring without a sensation of dyspepsia, and hence it was that he had at first only called on Markham, talked civilly to him, and as civilly let him drop.

All this was now removed by the Curate's gladly given assistance,—by the Curate's own tact, and by the Curate's own winning manners.

Indeed the Vicar had reason to be grateful; to be proud of him,—and by way of showing the warmth of his feelings he determined forthwith to entertain the young clergyman at a Drellington dinner party.

This scheme we know was nipped in the bud by Mrs. Wreford, who on the Vicar's calling early on Monday morning to see how the land lay about that unfortunate bow of Ethel's, (of which he had heard something in the passage of arms between his children at the breakfast table,) told him point blank that the Curate was not a man to fall into that sort of thing, and that if he had any intention of ever making his admirable services available to the lightening of his own labours, (Mrs. Wreford knew her man,) he would ask him to some entertainment

where the consumption of solid and fluid did not form the preponderating share of the evening's amusement.

And thus it was that on this Thursday evening all Drellington, consisting of those we noticed in a preceding chapter, and a great many more, were assembled in the handsome drawing room at the Vicarage, to meet Eva and Edgar Markham.

Every one in this world has a mode peculiar to himself of showing his satisfaction at the making of a new acquaintance; and in a country place these different modes are sometimes exceedingly diverting. In the present instance Markham and his sister, who were both possessed of a very keen sense of the ridiculous, though they never showed it openly, were remarkably struck by a few of the Drellington modes of approval.

Major Pander was warm in his salutations, as if his feelings were too strong for him. He was in reality indignant at not forming the third at a little tête-à-tête which the Vicar and old Doolittle were conducting in the dining room for their own particular behoof, and which he, Pander, had experience enough to know was being carried on at a mahogany table with something on it, and a dumb waiter not far off.

Miss Piminy seized both Eva's hands, and confidentially gave her to understand that she, Jemima, would have been over at Holycross months ago, only that it would not do in a place like Drellington, where there were such heartburnings, such jealousies, (here the little woman raised her hands,) for a person who was of the least consequence in the place, "a unit, my dear Miss Markham, a me-re unit, to take the lead in such a step, though I said to my friend Miss Saunders, whom you can ask—(Miss Saunders, by the by, was not in the room, nor even invited, as Miss Piminy knew very

well)—‘My dear Miss Saunders, I do assure you, that if some people who ought to take the lead do not call on that sweet Miss Markham this month, I really must forget my place and go myself.’”

Eva received all this of course with a grateful smile and looked very pretty and fascinating. Ethel’s company had quite cheered her up, and she seemed better than she had been for weeks past.

“And our dear Ethel,” continued Miss Piminy, in a tone as if she considered her a piece of property in which she had a share, “to be beforehand with us all and to say nothing about it, I always WILL say,” (this was said as if she expected the room would rise against her for speaking her mind,) “that if there is a young lady in the world who does a good action and never will be praised for it—”

“Please don’t, Miss Piminy,” interrupted Ethel. “Nobody will consider my making Miss Markham’s acquaintance in the light of a good action. I did very wrong if anything in waiting so long.”

“What a sly girl you are, Ethel,” replied the old maid; “as if you could take *me* in,—as if I did not know that you were friends six weeks ago. You forget Mr. Markham’s bow, you sly thing, on Sunday night.”

This was awkward. “I hope you won’t oblige me to defend myself by calling Mr. Markham as a witness to my veracity; it would be rather hard on me,” said Ethel, colouring, and drawing Eva away to another part of the room.

And so it was with all of them. Some patronised them; others abused the conduct of their neighbours; some pointedly criticised his sermon, and tried to draw him into conversation on the religious peculiarities they attributed to him, but he laughed them all off, and as old Gascoigne observed to Pander, “he was a knowing bird; and you could not get the salt on his tail any way.”

Miss Gascoigne however, surnamed Harry, had matured her plan before she left home. She was resolved, she said, "to see what the dear man was made of;" and being perfectly ready to be converted by him, if he paid her proper attention, she took Fanny Turnbull with her, just to cover the approaches, and proceeded to reconnoitre the ground in right workmanlike style. First, she watched how he took all the nonsense that the rest of the party severally addressed to him; and when she saw that he gravely swallowed some of it, and laughingly put aside other parts,—in short, behaved as if he never lost his self-possession, but remained always on his guard, she determined, with the cool rapidity which characterises great commanders, to make a bold assault in face. And so keeping Fanny always on her arm, she waited until he was standing alone, sipping weak tea, and catching every word that was said at the other end of the room, when she walked up and thus commenced her attack.

"Mr. Markham, will you tell me what is the meaning of a Tractarian?"

He was rather surprised as well as amused at the abruptness of the question, but replied at once—

"I am not certain I could tell you on such an occasion as this—not sure that the time and the place might not interfere with my making myself intelligible on such a subject. But why are you so anxious to know?"

"You are trying to put me off," she said suspiciously.

"Indeed I am not," he replied, "but it is a subject I should not like to discuss lightly. Besides, I should like to know why you put this question to me."

"Because it is said that you are one."

"Indeed!" he answered. "Well, I only know

one way of helping you, and that is by lending you some books to —."

"No. I have no patience for books. I won't be put off in that way. I'll tell you what you shall do, Mr. Markham. You shall bear in mind what the Tractarians, whether rightly so called or not, do now-a-days—you *must* know that, and you shall then tell me what improvement you recommend me, a Tractarian, (because I may have a leaning that way) to make in our parish church."

Markham thought to himself,—“Now how shall I stop this girl? She won't be put off with a joke. I'll take her at her word, and recommend an improvement which will cost her some trouble.—Why,” he said, as if he had been considering which among the many excellencies of that edifice admitted of any, “You know that some young ladies contribute among themselves a handsome offering now and then to the church they attend. Supposing you and Miss Turnbull were to work a handsome carpet for the flooring round the altar, the one there now is worn out.”

“That will never do,” said Harry, “the place is not worth it. The altar rails are all tumbling down as it is.”

“I can't conceive anything more in your favour,” replied he; “let them fall altogether, and you have everything as it ought to be—a stone altar, no communion rails, and your new offering,—what can you want more?”

“Want more!” said old Warburton, poking his red nose into the conversation; “why! *to use it all*, which nobody ever does now; the entire service is said in the reading-desk with us.”

“Indeed!” said Markham drily, “then I agree with Miss Gascoigne, that it would never do to place an offering there.”

“Oh, here's the Vicar!” continued Warburton

as that dignitary entered the room with old Doolittle, who looked as if he had forgotten in the *séance* just finished that he should see any one in the drawing-room at all. "I say, Vicar, Miss Gascoigne wants to make improvements in your church, and Mr. Markham is suggesting them."

"Mr. Markham's suggestions will always be welcome," said the Vicar, shaking him most affectionately by the hand. "But to my idea there is but one improvement that will ever answer in my church, and that is to burn it down altogether," he remarked coolly.

"Gracious me—burn—burn who?—what?" cried Miss Piminy, whose curiosity was roused.

"Oh, nothing," said Jane in a low voice; "they are talking only of burning the church. Perhaps Mr. Markham knows best *if any one should be in it on the occasion.*"

"That *would* be an inquisition," said the gallant and facetious Pander in the same tone.

Jane's words were quietly spoken, and without her moving a muscle of her countenance. But Markham's senses, like those of many nervous men, were exceedingly acute, and though the sounds were inaudible to those who formed the group he was with, he heard every word. A slight flush of surprise crossed his face, but only for a moment; and as he turned his eyes carelessly on the unconscious speaker, he said to himself, "What, an enemy here, and among the ladies too, and I who fancied them all asleep!"

At this juncture the Vicar commencing a somewhat ponderous attempt at raillery with Henrietta Gascoigne, Markham had opportunity to notice more nearly Fanny Turnbull, who had been one of them during the preceding conversation, though she had not joined in it, and he was surprised to find that although so young she could be so intelligent

and attractive. Fanny indeed shone to immense advantage on this particular evening: her youth, and a certain ingenuousness of manner quite justified the hopes of her father, and the alarm of her mother as to her future promise.

But if she looked well before, while she was only listening to Markham addressing some one else, how did her animation increase now, when he proceeded to direct his attention to her alone. Taking up some sketches which were lying on the table, and which, as he half suspected, happened to be hers, he soon drew her into conversation respecting them, and so quietly explained where they were deficient, at the same time that he gave them a very full meed of praise, that Fanny was delighted. From the sketches themselves they passed to the subjects of them, and she, a little girl, not many months escaped from the nursery, found herself chatting easily with a man whom she was most afraid of on earth, and he listening and asking her questions, as if he were really interested. The fact is, he found her a very nice, attractive, conversible little girl, and as long as this *tête-à-tête* lasted, he was left in peace; as, however, the rest of the society had at present done little else than drink tea and stare at each other, it will be understood that they were quite open also to the employment of looking at this particular couple.

"How charming dear Fanny looks to-night, Mrs. Turnbull," said Miss Piminy, lighting at once on the topic, which of all others caused that lady distress of mind, "and she seems to enjoy herself so."

"Oh! my dear Miss Piminy, you have destroyed my peace for this night," said the poor mother; "I declare I was so busy providing for my guests," (nothing by the by had been provided for them at

present) "that I had not time to think of my sorrows. I do assure you, my dear Miss Markham, that this is the sole anxiety of my life."

"What a lucky person you are, if you have no more real anxiety than that!" said Mrs. Wreford, who had only just arrived (she thought half the evening at the Vicarage would be enough for her.) "Your daughter is in safe hands now, at all events, and she really seems to get on uncommonly well, upon my word!"

Before Mrs. Turnbull could make any reply, she was called away by her elder daughter; and then Eva said innocently to Miss Warburton, "What is it that distresses Mrs. Turnbull so much? Are either of her daughters ill?"

"Don't you know?" returned Miss Warburton, delighted to have something to tell that was new to some one. "It is such fun: just listen. Ever since Miss Fanny Turnbull has shown promise of good looks, poor Mrs. Turnbull will look upon the fact in the light of a calamity. She says that her child is destined to sorrow and temptation,—that beauty is the sure accompaniment of misfortune; and, do what you can to soothe her, will prophesy a most disastrous prospect for Fanny."

"Which is she?" asked Eva.

"The tall young girl with blue ribbons talking to your brother."

Both Eva and Ethel turned to look at the two, and as they completed their scrutiny, and turned to their former position, their eyes met, and they both smiled; for it gave them some idea of the extent to which the society was congenial to Markham, that he had chosen a mere child to converse with.

These two had been the especial care of George Turnbull the entire evening. He had brought them portfolios to inspect, and new books to look at their title-pages, and had talked nonsense to

them ; and now he said it was high time to get rid of some of the old folk, that they might have a little music. And so off he went on that errand, on which he was engaged when the little episode just recorded took place.

Shortly after this, Mrs. Gascoigne, her husband, Mrs. Turnbull, Warburton, and a few more, were drafted off into another room for whist, Pander accompanying them to cut in, in case he was wanted ; which for their sakes we will hope he was not, as he invariably revoked once at least in a rubber, and abused his partner afterwards because he did it.

And then each young lady was escorted to the pianoforte, one after the other, whether musical or not, to contribute her quota to the evening's amusement. This was the invariable routine of Drelington gaiety. It clearly was only done to get rid of the evening, and not from any enjoyment derived from the process ; because, while one young lady was performing her share of the allotted labour, the rest of the party were paying no attention to her whatever, but were talking rather louder than they would have done had nothing of the kind been taking place.

It is but fair, however, to mention, that on this occasion they did listen to Eva, which is no credit to them, for no human being who had not a heart of stone could help doing that ; and that some little decorum was also observed when Ethel performed her share, the effect of which Eva, perhaps, did not mar, by persisting in accompanying her friend on the piano herself. But I regret to say that these were the only exceptions ; and that Edgar Markham, passionately fond of music as he was, was among the offenders.

He had some excuse, however ; for, during a rather harrowing performance by Miss Piminy on

the keys, he spied a capital opportunity for a few words with Miss Jane Turnbull, whose remark on the Church-burning question had reached his ears. He had also heard some expression fall from her lips about his making "perverts," not "converts," later in the evening; and now, as he saw her standing apart near a side table, playing with one of the ladies' bracelets, which had been left there while the owner was at the instrument, he thought that such a chance should not be passed by lightly. So, edging slowly up to her, he thus began :

"You don't play, Miss Turnbull."

"I never had any taste for music," was the reply.

"I did not know that was necessary," he returned, in a low tone.

"I mean, that I never had taste sufficient even to learn," she said, coldly.

"I can understand that," said he; "your tastes lead you so much to helping the wants of other minds, that you have no care even to pleasing your own."

"I do not understand you," she said.

"And yet my meaning is plain. Those whose heart and soul are in helping the poor, tending the sick, and instructing the young and ignorant, have neither inclination nor taste left for more refined occupation, even though that occupation be the acquiring of accomplishments for their own gratification."

This was rather a slap-dash way of administering praise; but Jenny liked it, anyhow, though it would have been more effective had it been given more delicately, and she little suspected that he spoke thus in order to compel her afterwards to perceive the inconsistency of her own conduct. She was prejudiced against Edgar, it is true; but only because it suited the part she played to be so. She

could not but feel that praise from such a man as him was worth having, and therefore waited to hear more.

"How do you know this of me? You never saw me till to-night," she asked.

"I have the evidence of my ears," he said. "You are spoken of as the only young lady in Drellington" (Ethel, it must be mentioned, never interfered on the Vicar's preserves) "who personally knows the poor. This is how I have known you, though I have never seen you before to-night."

"Well, to-night," she said, with a sneer, "you have taken long enough to think about making my acquaintance."

"Shall I tell you why?" She waited, and he continued, "Because you dislike me,"—she gave a start,—"because everything I do or preach is in your mind attributed to a wrong motive; because in your belief I am even now a wolf in sheep's clothing,—a man who fights under false colours—"

"Hush!" she said, in great alarm; for she could not think how he had discovered this. "How do you know what you are saying?"

"By the evidence of my ears, as before," was the reply.

"And you would believe slanderous stories of me behind my back?" said she with scorn, and fixing in her mind on her brother George as the informant.

"I would believe nothing unworthy of you, nothing against you, if brought to me second-hand," he replied rapidly, but in the same low tone as before. "I judge only from what I heard fall from your own lips this night."

Jenny was ready to sink with shame and vexation. She looked in vain towards the door,—her usual resource in cases when she was floored. Her

head drooped, and her neck and face were crimson ; while all the time she felt that those mild reproachful eyes were upon her.

"Forgive me, if I have distressed you," he said ; "the words were not intended for my ears, I know, and therefore consider them as unsaid. I should not have mentioned that I had heard them, except in defence of the charge that I should have addressed you sooner. May I hope that you will not judge of me, or of any one, so hastily as those words have led me to believe you do ? If there is a difference of opinion between us, why should we not discuss it calmly ? You may be mistaken about the doctrines I hold. Ask me of them yourself. I will make no attempt to press them on your convictions ; but as you have the reputation of being tender, compassionate, and open-handed, be also fair."

"Forgive me," she said ; for his tones had gone to her heart. "Forgive me ; I retract every word I uttered, every thought I have entertained. Nay, more, I will try and believe as you do, if you will explain what your belief is."

This was the *amende honorable* in a vengeance.

"I am too well repaid as it is, by your so easily promising to remove your scruples. Rather pardon me for giving pain," he said.

"I deserved it fully," returned the excited girl ; "you have taught me a good lesson. But tell me, pray, what were the words you heard ? I retract them, every syllable ; only, tell me which they were ?" She wished to know how much he had heard.

"I will write them on a card, and give them to you," said Markham ; "I would not pain you by repeating them."

During this colloquy Edgar had been far more vivacious than was consistent with his usual habit ;

and this naturally attracted attention. The young lady on her side was really excited, and the whole company, who had been watching them, were astonished beyond expression. Mrs. Wreford was fairly puzzled. Even Ethel wondered what on earth he could have to say in that earnest way to one whom she held in such little estimation as Jane Turnbull; and George was in ecstasies. "Would he not tease her to-morrow, that was all!"

All these doubts, however, were put an end to by the announcement of supper, during which only a temporary relapse took place, by Edgar's giving Jane a card, which she put into her glove, saying, in a low tone, "I will never forget this."

Eva alone looked satisfied among the whole party, being perfectly assured that her brother would do only what was right.

The Vicar, in spite of Mrs. Wreford's advice, could not make up his mind to close the evening without stuffing his guests, and so had covered a very large table in the dining-room with everything that was edible in Drellington, and a great deal that was not; to all of which due justice was done, particularly by Pander and Doolittle.

Eva was to sleep this night at Newlands. Ethel had pressed, and Edgar had thought it better, on the ground of fatigue; and so Eva had consented, on condition that her brother would call early on the morrow, to see how she was. She could hardly bear to be in a different house from him, poor girl, even for twelve hours.

It may have been remarked as strange, that during the whole of this evening, and indeed on other occasions, Edgar paid so little attention to Miss Conway. Strange or not, the fact is so. Except on one occasion, when Eva stood opposite him, talking and giving him all sorts of commands about his personal comfort, just before the break up, and

when Ethel was beside her,—except on that one occasion, he had never addressed to her more than a salutation, and even then he was only very civil. The Vicar remarked it, and thought he was a fool. Mrs. Wreford remarked it, and it set her thinking; for she knew something of human nature, and did not look at it in quite the same light as the others.



CHAPTER IX.

A MORNING AT NEWLANDS.

THE moment that Mrs. Wreford and her two charges were safe in the carriage, and the windows drawn up, she broke out about Markham's extraordinary tête-à-tête with Jane at the entertainment they had just quitted. "Really, Eva," said she "your brother is a most singular man; his behaviour with Jane Turnbull was of that mysterious kind which we only see in melodramas. Can you tell us what he means?"

"Oh, aunt," broke in Ethel, "don't speak of Mr. Markham's conduct with Jane as if you thought he had been paying attentions to her. What can he have in common with so deceitful a girl?"

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Wreford, "I judge only by my eyes; and you, unless Eva has let you into the secret, can do no more. Here we see two persons, apparently unknown to each other, meeting in public, a conversation ensuing, in which there are low sounding speeches on the one side, and blushes and confusion on the other side, with a note and 'I will never forget this,' in a tragical voice to wind up with."

"I cannot listen with patience to the matter spoken of in that way," said Ethel. "Mr. Markham will certainly explain it; he owes it to the gossiping people in the room to do that."

"Mr. Markham owes nothing to any one," said her aunt gravely. "Even had it been at our own house, I do not see what right we should have to expect an explanation, unless either of us had been the actor instead of Jane Turnbull, and then perhaps your uncle might think himself entitled to one."

Ethel was silent. She seldom received a rebuke, and therefore could not reply to one. Still she could not quite dismiss the subject so coolly as her aunt; and when the girls got to their bed-rooms, the matter was debated pro and con with Pansy, who after making about ten as ridiculous suggestions on the subject as any young lady who cared very little about it could be supposed to make, declared fairly she did not see her way through it. As however Ethel continued to harp on it, even when she was bidding Eva good night, the latter threw her white arms round her neck and said, "Ethel, dear, I'll wager my place in your regard that Edgar has done nothing of which you will disapprove." So Ethel with this assurance went to bed with her mind relieved.

The next morning, however, diverted the current of all their thoughts into another channel. Eva was seriously unwell. The excitement of even such a dissipation as that of the previous evening, was too much for her debilitated frame: total prostration and low fever necessitated the summoning of old Doolittle to Newlands at an early hour. That distinguished old lady delivered an oracular opinion much after this fashion: "Dear me, hum! very sad, hum! Great debility, ha! hum, absence of vital energy, hum! Last night too much! Must remain quiet a few days, hum! ha! better at Newlands till next week, hum! Pills and some drops — give a tone to system, ha! hum!" and the kind old lady returned home to enter the visit in his day-book, while his assistant made up the physic.

And so it was, that when Edgar arrived at about noon, he found Eva *en deshabille* on a sofa in the library, looking very feverish, and with Pansy, Ethel, and Angelica hanging round her and endeavouring to please her with a thousand little endearments.

If Ethel had any lingering doubts in her mind of the propriety of his conduct the preceding evening, they were dispelled in a moment when she saw the tender, alarmed manner in which he took his sister in his arms and drew her to his bosom, asked of her ailings, spoke encouragingly to her, disguising, though badly, his alarm, and then laid her again in her place, smoothing every wrinkle in the pillows he had displaced. "Only such a sister is worthy of such a brother," she thought.

Angelica remembered with *empressement* a kick her brother Tom had favoured her with the previous week in the nursery, and Mrs. Wreford tried to call to mind how many civil things, if any, her brother Hugh, Herbert, or even Edward had said to her in the course of their natural lives.

And now that the question of Eva's removal was discussed, Mrs. Wreford said it would be unkind to *her* to speak of it. Ethel believed Eva wanted to leave *her*. Pansy, who was a capital pianist, having in the leisure hours, when others went out to parties, done nothing but practise, thought that if Miss Markham would just tell *her* the proper stops to use, she should not acquit herself badly at the organ on Sunday (an idea which the Curate caught at immediately): and Angelica would so much like to teach just for once at Holycross Sunday school. Why multiply inducements? Eva, at her brother's urgent request, and on his promise to see her daily, agreed to remain for a week, and the whole party proceeded to be as happy, after the fashion of each, as circumstances would permit.

"And now, Mr. Markham, just explain your conduct of last night," said Mrs. Wreford; "for I can tell you, you are in some disgrace here."

"I hope not," said he, "though I confess the circumstances were such as to puzzle any one. Even I, when I began the conversation, was quite unprepared for the effect I produced."

"Is it a secret, or must we still be left to speculate on the blushes, the low voices, and the billet-doux?"

"It is no secret as far as I am concerned; still it may be one on Miss Jane Turnbull's side, and therefore I can say nothing until she thinks proper to enlighten you."

"After that, of course we must say no more," said Mrs. Wreford, much pleased. She had half feared he might make a confidant of some one, perhaps only his sister, but some one. But she continued with a smile, "This is not the only thing connected with last night which has caused me amusement, and in which you again figure."

"I?" said Edgar in surprise.

"You," replied the elder lady; "but don't look alarmed, in this instance there is no secrecy. I heard from Miss Jemima Piminy, that Harry Gascoigne had had the effrontery to call you a Tractarian to your face."

"No, no," said Edgar; "that is not quite correct. She asked me if I was one; she did not call me one."

All the party began laughing when they heard of Miss Gascoigne's *escapade*, and were in the full enjoyment of the idea when a servant entered to say that Miss Jane Turnbull had called to see Miss Markham, should he admit her?

"Certainly!" said Mrs. Wreford; "if Eva does not think it would be too much for her; we are a large party as it is."

"Pray let her come in," said Eva's faint voice. "I like to hear you all laugh, and it is not fair to exclude her from the general amusement."

"By all means let her join us," said Markham; "I really liked what I saw of her last night, and I think it would be good for her to know Eva."

If ever Ethel had doubted him, it was all over now. Jane had no reason to complain of her reception. Eva's kind and well chosen words, and Mrs. Wreford's polished address would have set a troubled spirit at rest. Jane sat down, and after a few minutes' quiet conversation with Eva, began to listen to the conversation which her entrance had for the moment interrupted.

"But did not you think it a great liberty," said Mrs. Wreford, alluding to Miss Gascoigne's question, "for her to speak to you in that way?"

"I hardly looked at it in that light," said Markham. "It certainly startled me, but the manner of the young lady was so utterly without the idea of giving offence, that I could not take it as such."

"You did not, however, answer her, I suppose?" replied the inquirer.

"You mean I did not tell her whether I was a Tractarian or not," said Markham. "No, I avoided the question. The subject is one of two serious a nature to discuss in such a place and at such a time; so I was obliged to put her off with such replies as I thought would satisfy the volatile nature of her inquiry."

Mrs. Wreford hesitated a moment and then said: "Can you look upon us as friends enough to answer a similar question if I put it to you?"

"Whether I am a Tractarian," said Markham smiling, "oh no, I shall be only too glad to answer any questions on such subjects, as I am sure that they will be listened to as they deserve." After a pause: "As to Tractarian, all such terms I greatly

dislike. The word applied originally to a *movement*. I may be of accord with the originators of it; but I prefer being called a High Churchman, though in reality I am but a 'Churchman' in the true meaning of that most pregnant word."

"You mean by that, that you do not like being called anything which implies being a party man," said Mrs. Wreford.

"I do; though it is hard now-a-days to be sincere and not incur such an imputation," returned Markham. "The fact is, and there is apparently no help for it, that nearly every one in Holy Orders is classed among the High or Low Church parties. It is true that a very large, if not the largest part of the whole, neither follows the very High Church nor the very Low Church party, so-called, in their extremes; but it has a leaning in every case to one or the other. And after all, in discussing these subjects, it is the only one which enables us to keep in view the material differences existing in the Church. Those differences we only hear of on rare occasions; while other questions, though they too may be of moment, are raised and agitated with the greatest fury, as if *they* were the material points of difference, because they are of a nature to blind by their apparent importance the judgments of those who only look upon the surface."

"I do not understand you," said Mrs. Wreford.

"I mean," said Markham, "that very nearly all the disputes we hear of now-a-days are on matters outwardly, of form; on crosses in the Church, on altar coverings, on candlesticks on the altar, on credence tables, &c. Now though all these things, I for one, think to be matters of importance, yet an uproar is raised against them, not because they are the material points at issue between the two parties, but because they serve for that anti-Popery cry so familiar to all of us in the history of this

country, and which has been raised even of late years for every sort of purpose. The effect of this mode of proceeding on the religious differences which now exist, is to prejudice against us the multitude, who, were the real differences raised in their unvarnished truth, would be on our side. I know many men who from a nervous superstitious horror of Papistical innovation would be against all crosses, candlesticks, and credence tables as themselves savouring of superstition, but who for all that on THE questions are High Churchmen."

"Then," said Jane, "if this be so; if the integrity of your doctrines is preserved without them, why should they be introduced at all?"

"The parties who defend them did not introduce them, Miss Turnbull. They have only restored them."

"But is not that a point in dispute?" said Mrs. Wreford.

"It is," said Edgar, "as all true statements are from time to time; and though often raised in several unsatisfactory shapes, it has never been judged with sufficient fairness by a tribunal competent to prove the truth of these assertions. *Only!* the fact that such is the ground, on which they take their stand '*restoration not innovation*,' ought never to be lost sight of by those who would argue the question fairly, because it completely acquits them of being in league with Rome, or of having the ghost of a desire, that Romish supremacy should be restored in this country. They claim only the *restoration* of those things 'which were in use in this Church of England in the second year of Edward VI., and which are not inconsistent with, nor break the uniformity of our present Prayer Book.' This is their order of battle: they deny that they advocate anything inconsistent with the law respecting the Church—mind that."

"But what right have you to say that the Low Church raise these points to blind the judgments of the unreflecting?" said Jane. "It is easy to impute motives, as we see in common life."

"Most true," replied Markham. "But I have reason enough for what I say without doing that. It is that they invariably attack with most bitterness an ornament, or a vestment, or some figure which is meant merely to convey a devotional association to the senses; take the one objection which they raise against the cross,—they have not adduced, nor can they adduce, one single authority for their position, that it was condemned at the Reformation, but they can adduce *some* evidence that images and crucifixes, i.e., the cross with the body of our LORD affixed, were, and so by confounding the cross with these they treat it as if it were in the same category, when in reality it has always been the badge of the Christian Faith in nearly every denomination of it."

"I myself certainly do not see any objection to the cross," said Mrs. Wreford.

"And who can, except for the purpose of a cry?" said Markham. "No objection, at all events, can be raised against it on the ground of innovation, as our church steeples and our graveyards for the last two centuries will prove. As for its being necessarily Papistical let any one go on the Continent and witness a Lutheran funeral; they will see there the cross carried on high in front of the body; let them enter a Lutheran church, they will see crosses enough; let them enter any of the edifices of the German Reformed Churches of Prussia, they will hardly fail to discover a cross on the altar there. Nearly all these questions are raised as a cry." After a pause he continued, "The Low Church would like the Ritual altered to a model of their own. Unfortunately the Ritual has not been carried out by

those whose duty it was to do so. Every attempt now to obey it in its integrity is in the contrary direction to that in which they are driving; the only way in which they can thwart such attempts is by raising the cry, 'Popery!'

"Is there no way of preserving the Ritual complete, without restoring *all* these things?" asked Mrs. Wreford.

"To my idea there is *not*,¹ excepting, perhaps, in matters of mere ornament; disuse can be no more an argument in matters of religion than neglect: there should be no hindrance to restoring forms which are an essential part of some doctrine."

"To what do you allude?" asked Ethel.

"To the placing, for instance, of the sacred elements on the table in the holy Sacrament only just before the saying of the prayer for the Church militant, that is a form involving a doctrine. It has fallen into disuse for many years, and its revival by the restoration of credence tables has formed another ground for a cry."

"Why a cry in this case?" said Jane.

"Because the world only got frightened at the word credence, which had a Romish smack about it. I knew a case in the West of England where the churchwardens of a parish placed a small side table in the chancel, which remained a considerable time there, until the unfortunate word was used one day, when such an uproar was made that it had to be removed."

"The best plan to obviate that difficulty," said Ethel, "would be to act as you do at Holycross."

"And how is that?" asked Jane.

"At Holycross there is a niche in the wall purposely," said Markham, "and so the table objection cannot arise."

¹ Markham clearly alludes here to restorations of matters which are inseparable from the due carrying out of the Ritual.

"Then you would give up altar cloths, and—"

"No, I would give up nothing. A church fitted in every respect after the pattern of Ridley and the Early Reformers cannot be far wrong to a lover of the English Church.

"But do not the Low Church meet you on that question of what is the Church of the Reformation?" said Mrs. Wreford.

"Oh! certainly," said Markham. "But the very name you have used, as well as the arguments on the point invariably go to show that the Reformation swept away one Church and built up another. I don't say that they argue this in so many words, but their argument itself amounts to this. Now see the immense advantage the Roman Catholics gain from such a line of reasoning. It enables them to treat us, not as a substantive branch of the first Apostolic Catholic Church, which we of the High Church know ourselves to be, but a dissenting community which has seceded from them, and to be looked at in the same light as any other schismatics."

"What possible advantage can that give them?" said Jane.

"One of the strongest in the eyes of a follower of the Gospel," said Markham,—“namely, the advantage of showing that we are not in the fold of the Great Shepherd; that like the hundreds of sects which have seceded from them, and which have fallen—as He said they would fall, and be forgotten—such as the Arians, Pelagians, the Donatists, the Montanists, the Novatians, and many others you never heard of, we shall fall likewise and be forgotten, or return into the true fold, namely, the Latin Communion so called, as they pretend they expect we shall do.”

"Then you place this present Church of ours at an earlier date than the Reformation," said Jane.

"Of course I do," he returned. "It is a True Branch of the One only Church, built by our LORD Himself on the foundation of the Apostles. The Acts of Parliament regulating its present condition themselves refer back to its position in years long antecedent to the Reformation."

Jane, like (alas! how many) others, had never heard this view of the question before. She was really interested, but she did not like to appear ignorant, and naturally fell into the common error of trying to convince her hearers of her superior knowledge on the subject, by disputing each point as it arose.

"I do not yet see," she said, "how you think the Reformation did affect the Church."

"In this way," was the answer. "The English branch of the Catholic Apostolic Church was, and is as much a substantive Church in itself as the Roman and Greek branches. As the Roman Church, and as other Churches have erred, it had erred. The effect of the Reformation on it was to reject only, what was corrupt and new to its primitive state: but at the same to retain what was primitive, and to restore to a proper use what, if primitive, had been abused. This is what the High Church party have in view in those so-called innovations which excite the prejudices and alarm of the Church's children."

"I confess I have derived great information from all this," said Mrs. Wreford; "therefore you must not think me sceptical from what I am going to say; but one thing does strike me; according to this view, the Tractarians—that is, the Puseyites, as the world calls them, must be the greatest enemies of the Romish Church, by the very fact of their proving the English branch to be as much a part of the true Church as the Latin."

"Undoubtedly, and so they are, though it is the

policy of the Low Church party to make the world think otherwise. You should read some of Wiseman's or Newman's opinions against the Puseyites, as you call them."

"Still Newman was one of you," said Jane; "how is it that the perverts are always men of your party, and generally the most able men?"

"No man," said Markham, "can explain why a great spirit falls from a high estate. It is as you say; but it would be hard indeed if a great cause were to be considered worthless, because there were deserters among its soldiers. The only explanation I can suggest is this: the two Churches, like others, derive their origin from the same principles; and we know, that up to a certain point, they agree. After that the abuses, from which the Reformation cleansed us, these men have been unable to see; and restlessness or private disappointment have made them seek a change. The fact, however, is immaterial to the question. Since these men went over to the Romish Church, the Romish Church has not ceased to rail at the party they deserted; and you must remember, that a still greater number of their proselytes have been made from the ranks of dissenters."

"Mr. Markham," said Ethel, "do tell us! When we began talking, you said that the forms, about which so much cry was now made,¹ were not the material difference between the High and Low Church parties, did you not? If so, what is the material difference?"

"The material difference consists in these two words—'*Sacramental and Unsacramental*'—the taking and using the Sacraments in the pure inconvertible meaning in which our SAVIOUR CHRIST

¹ The reader needs scarcely to be reminded, that this conversation was anterior to the circumstances which have since resulted in the Bath Judgment.

gave them, and that of considering them as a mere institution, badge or memorial. The High Church does the first, the Low Church the second."

"I want to ask this too," said Jane with a look of triumph, "do you not believe in the Real Presence?"

"Of course I do, and so does your father, I am certain, however carelessly he may speak and think. But Miss Turnbull, like the folk who listen to a cry of whom I spoke some short time back, you are only frightened at an expression. The doctrine of the Real Presence is not Transubstantiation."

Jane felt herself getting out of her depth, and she thought of last night; so she held her tongue. After a pause Mrs. Wreford said, "I fully believe in CHRIST'S Presence among us whenever we are gathered together in His Name, and more whenever we keep His commandments, as He promised it should be; and therefore there can be no difficulty in believing it at the celebration of the Holy Communion; but," she said more gravely, "in what way do you speak of it now? The bread and the wine are but figures."

"Our LORD'S words were, 'This is My Body, this is My Blood:' who then dare say, This is not His Body, but a figure of His Body only?" said Markham.

Mrs. Wreford looked very uneasy. "Then you believe the elements to change?"

"I do not say so, but simply this. In faith I see CHRIST really present under the species of the bread and wine. I do not comprehend the manner of how it is so; but in faith I see Him present, and adore that Presence. I do not question, I do not presume to define the manner of that Presence; the mystery of it I have no business with, except to bless it in worship and thanksgiving; but I see it therein by faith."

"I do not wonder now," said Ethel in a low tone, for she was filled with unspeakable awe at the subject, "I do not wonder at the things that are said against the Puseyites, (may I use the word.) People never take time to understand."

"So, alas, it must always be, Miss Conway, where the soil is left without being tilled," said Markham. "Apathy comes first on the uncared-for heart; then ignorance, the natural weed of that ground; then prejudice, its sure concomitant."

"I fear when I look around me," said Mrs. Wreford with a smile, "that the ground has been then left too long, Mr. Markham; you have not much chance with those views now; do you think you have?"

"'The labourer tills, and plants, and waters,' Mrs. Wreford, 'but GOD gives the increase.' I have faith in the increase. Many have told me, my old Vicar at Morlington among them, that the mischief is done; that we are too late: for all that I see signs, small ones perhaps, but sure signs, of a good seed time. I believe, so surely as I speak here, that through whatever toils or troubles she may have to pass, the Church will yet be triumphant."

"Hush!" said Mrs. Wreford, "Eva is fast asleep: it is better not to disturb her."

"And it is a hint to me that I am sleeping too; I ought to be at Holycross writing sermons, instead of preaching them here," said he.

"You will come back," said the kind hostess. "Come to dinner, and I will ask George Turnbull to meet you, as we are all ladies. You must see your sister again."

"You are very kind, and I shall be only too glad if you make the hour late, for I have much to do."

"Will seven suit you?"

"Excellently. Miss Turnbull, if you are going

too, as I see you are, let me join you as far as the lodge gate—that is, if you are not afraid of me.”

She laughingly replied that she was not; and Edgar, after a quiet kiss on his pale sister's forehead, accompanied her as far as their roads lay together.

She was chatty and in good humour; as they were about to part, she said, “I do not say I am satisfied with all your views, as I have heard them to-day, but I will keep my promise in trying to weigh them impartially. I have two favours in return to ask.”

“Name them,” said he.

“The first is that you will not mention to my brother George what passed in our conversation last night; the second, that you will also ask him not to tease me about my religious opinions. You do not know what I suffered this morning from what he calls his fun.”

“You may rely on me that he will not repeat it, and that he will never know a word of what passed last night;” and so with a few words of common courtesy they parted.

Edgar returned to dinner, as had been arranged.

Eva was better, having slept during the day; and every effort was made to let her not think that any one was alarmed about her; but she was fidgety about her brother being so far from her, and it required much of his tact to keep her quiet and at her ease. No more was said on the subject of the Church that night. Edgar got a promise out of George that he would tease Jane no more; and after some music from Pansy, and many good things from the mistress of the house, the two gentlemen took their leave.

As on the previous evening George accompanied his friend part of the way home. But the night was of a widely different character; the sky was

covered with heavy dark clouds; the wind was inclined to be boisterous, and the weather looked as it sometimes does in this country, like November, in the middle of June. These influences perhaps, coupled with Eva's state, made Edgar low and dispirited.

"What's the matter," said the more elastic lieutenant, "you seem out of spirits to-night."

"I am," said Markham; "I have had a disagreeable insight into the future this evening."

"I wonder what future he means," thought George.

"I have often wondered, do you know, Turnbull," continued Edgar, "whether any Christian, really a Christian mind, ever ought to be happy in this world."

"What does the fellow mean?" thought George. "Well, I don't know," he said aloud; "any how, I think he is a great fool, if he does not try."

Edgar laughed, and said he did not understand him, which George remarked was the truest thing he ever said in his life.

And George plodded home, distorting Edgar's two last sentences into all sorts of shapes, in order to get at that which was most horribly antagonistic to his own prospects with Ethel; and thereby not fulfilling his own position of "being happy if he could."

And Edgar walked on also, reflecting in his half cynical way as he did when alone, though resigned enough to difficulties, when they oppressed him. Once he stopped and fixed his eyes on a light in a cottage window some way off, and after he had seen it flicker and then disappear, and then appear again, and then go out altogether, as lights always do when you look at them from a distance on a dark night, he said,— "And Eva too is to go; oh! my God, and what will come next?"



CHAPTER X.

HITHER AND THITHER.

EvA did not return to Holycross till the middle of the ensuing week. The gentle care and tenderness of the party at Newlands, though it restored the even tenor of her general health which had been somewhat shaken by even that small party at the Vicarage, would effect little in respect to future improvement. However she was better, decidedly better; and her return home to her brother made her cheerful and even hopeful. What a change it was to Holycross a fortnight ago! Then she was alone, passing a dreamy, not unhappy, life, but with a constant fancy that she should like to have some one by her, though she as constantly scolded her brother when he suggested to her any plan by which some such aid might be obtained.—Now she was never alone: Ethel was her own mistress, she had always been pretty much that, but now was more so than ever; and Ethel would always be with her, at least if she could not with propriety to her two aunts' necessities be so, either Pansy or Angelica were to supply her place, an arrangement with which Mrs. Wreford cordially fell in, for she also in this short time had learnt to love the poor fading girl, and she said it would be hard indeed, if with so many females in her domain Newlands could not spare her one at least.

The Sunday preceding her return home Pansy made her *début* on the Holycross organ, and barring a little nervousness, and that she did not sing as well as play, a want which the little rustic choir felt more than any one else, she acquitted herself *à merveille*; Angelica accompanied her from Newlands to take Eva's superintendence at the girls' school for the day.

One great relief to Edgar's anxieties was therefore produced by the occurrences of this Sunday, inasmuch as Eva was not henceforth tied to the organ: so long as there was no way of providing a substitute for her, nothing would ever prevent her from overtaxing her strength for that purpose, and the reflection of this was a constant source of anxiety to her brother. Now there would be no more worry on this point; for Eva as her strength failed her, no longer hesitated to employ Pansy's services now she knew she could get them; and Pansy, who also loved Eva as a part and parcel of her dear sister Ethel, was only too proud to be employed in such a way. And thus commenced an arrangement which made Pansy to the conclusion of my tale the organist of Holycross Church.

And so passed the two months ensuing on Midsummer day. Eva progressing—receding, progressing—and receding again.—Ethel loving and tending her unceasingly, at the same time learning and laying to heart those stores of knowledge, the channels of which she had panted so long to discover. Edgar outwardly calm, cheerful, even at times gay, but really firmly surveying the steadily approaching inevitable future. Pansy sometimes relieving Ethel, and Angelica filling up gaps when she was wanted; nor must we forget Mrs. Wreford, who afforded too her share of sympathy and amusement to the dying girl.

Yes, there is no use disguising the fact—Eva

was dying.—The gradual decay of the vital power was the cause,—she had no disease; no pulmonary complaint was undermining her life,—the lamp was burning out, that was all,—and each time that she receded or progressed, was but the flicker of the expiring flame.

Old Doolittle, who after he was called in at Newlands had made good his footing without delay at Holycross, broke the painful intelligence of what must be the result to Markham, through the instrumentality of a proper measure of conventional phrases. But his information fell with very little effect on Edgar's ears, for he could have instructed old Doolittle quite as correctly on the same subject the very first evening he had the honour of making his acquaintance. So that the old Doctor surprised at the cool "thank you" with which his opinion was received, was fain to remark to the Vicar, at the close of a bottle and half of the accustomed beverage, "that Markham might be a good preacher, hum! but that he was a man of no feeling,—hum,—ha!"

On the very same occasion also, this respected member of the College of Surgeons had to communicate that just three days after he had made the intimation which called forth the rhinoceros qualities of the Curate of Holycross, that person had somewhat abruptly informed him of the expected advent to Gramford on professional business of an old friend of his, an eminent physician of the great manufacturing town of Morlington; also that he, Markham, proposed to take advantage of this happy coincidence, and that he desired him, Doolittle, to meet this eminent man in consultation on Eva's case, on such and such a day next week.

It was so long since any request of a similar tenor had been made to Doolittle, if indeed such ever had been made at all, that the old lady was posi-

tively bewildered, and inquired of his friends whether it was in accordance with his position for him to accede to the request. Pander, who being devoid of brains, and also utterly ignorant of the usages of society, was the most proper person in his idea to consult in the first instance, looked, as he thought, sagacious, though really intensely like an idiot, and avowed that he did not like the look of it; but the Vicar being put in possession of the facts soon set the matter to rights, announced to Doolittle that it would be worth at least half a dozen dinner parties to him, and drew up a flaming account of the transaction to be sent in due time to the 'Gramford Trumpeter,' with a view to such anticipated results.

The consultation took place in due course, and as might be expected altered very little the hopes of the invalid's state; some slight change of diet and medicine, some alteration in the apartments to afford her more air or room, was all that resulted to her from it. But Doolittle gained no little honour and glory from the meeting with the great physician himself, as well as from the rather highly coloured anecdotes he told about it.

Everything respecting these matters of course were duly debated at the vicar's table, and during one of these discussions that worthy expressed his surprise that the Doctor had so limited his researches in respect of the internal economy of Markham's household, a point on which the worthy churchman was somewhat interested. The reply was, that the disciple of Galen had used all his efforts in the direction mentioned without much apparent success; and to do him justice so he had, for it was a matter of history that Beaumont kept excellent wine, which Doolittle and others had perseveringly helped to consume until the day of his disgrace drew nigh—when they deserted, and left him to his

fate—but it was a matter of conjecture only, whether when he resigned his house and his furniture to his successor he had included his cellar with it. Markham, however, had only asked him to a quiet dinner once; on which occasion he had placed a bottle of port wine on the table, and when Doolittle had despatched that, he drinking only a couple of glasses of sherry himself, he had scandalised his guest's ideas of good breeding by ordering coffee, without consulting the particular state of the other's thirst.

"Ah! but I did not mean only that," said the Vicar, who had his own reasons for inquiring. "I want to know whether you have heard nothing of the connexions of these two people. There must be a father, or sister, or another brother of this girl, who will wish to see her, and who in the ordinary course of things must see her before she goes out of the world!"

Now before Doolittle answers this question, we must inform the reader that the Vicar's attention had been drawn more than once to the relations which existed between Markham and his daughter Jane. He was too experienced to attach any importance to the little episode which took place in his own drawing room on the night of his party, but it was subsequent events that induced his worldly mind to form conclusions on the subject. Whenever Edgar and Jane met, there seemed to be some sort of understanding between them. He was more than attentive, always studiously considerate to her. She always brightened up in his society, and seemed really happy, which she never did when with her sisters only at home. More than this, he was known on two or three occasions to have met her accidentally in the neighbourhood. There was in truth quite enough to found a good love affair in such a public as Drellington. "It would not be a bad thing for Jenny," argued the Vicar to him-

self, for he took no partner into his anticipations, "if the fellow has a little money, or if Lord Tramontane can be got to promise him something better than Holycross. I wonder what his connexions are. He must have some connexions beside this little dying threadpaper of a sister. I'll pump Doolittle;" and so he did pump Doolittle, and this is the result.

Doolittle informed him that he had only one piece of information bearing on the question, which he had picked up from one Jeremiah Bate, who was the chief gossip of the village, and whose name we have had occasion to mention before. Jeremiah said that one day last week, (we are speaking now of about the middle of the month of September,) none of the young ladies came down from Newlands till late in the afternoon, a circumstance sufficient to excite his (Bate's) surprise; but that about midday a carriage belonging to the Blue Bottle Hotel, at Gramford, arrived at Holycross instead, and baited there, remaining altogether two hours; that a gentleman shorter than Mr. Markham, and fair, and bearing about him some marks of family likeness, particularly about his walk and carriage, descended at the parsonage, where he remained the whole time; that on his departure the two had shaken hands, but after a ceremonious fashion; that there was a dull, odd frown about the Curate's brow which he, Bate, had never noticed before, and "did not like the look on;" and that the stranger had evidently, from the marks on his face, and the way he held his pocket-handkerchief, been shedding tears. The postboy could give no further information, than that the gentleman had arrived that morning by the down train at Gramford, and had hired a carriage at the Blue Bottle Inn for Holycross. All that Doolittle could himself supply to aid this narrative was, that when he called that evening himself to see Miss Markham

he found her much worse, as if she had been subjected to considerable excitement, and no answer was given to his inquiries of the cause.

The Vicar was fain to put up with this rather unsatisfactory story, and to trust to the course of events for an elucidation of his doubts; a course to which he resigned himself more willingly, from a pretty sure conviction that Markham was not likely, just now that his sister was, as it were, at death's door, to push his wooing with Miss Jane to a definite conclusion, or to any point of sufficient importance to warrant him in exerting his paternal authority towards unravelling the mystery of the connexions of his future son-in-law.

And about Jane herself—what did she think about it. Just this. Jane, it must be borne in mind, was not a young lady of a very romantic turn. She had in her as much of that quality as any girl of her age might have, and no more. The idea of catching Markham certainly had crossed her mind early—as early as the day of the religious disputation at Newlands, and after they had shaken hands at the park gates. Afterwards, when they met on the good terms, which since then always existed between them, she seriously thought of drawing him on by a gradual renunciation of her principles, and particularly when she fancied he seemed more than ordinarily interested in discussing them. But she was a prudent girl, and much as her heart felt inclined to yield, she had no idea of parting with it on even a doubtful venture. So she played a waiting game, and day after day a persuasion, though seemingly founded on no reasonable ground, fixed itself in her mind,—which she could not discard, and which, if true, was fatal to every idea of success, and that was,—that at no very distant period, Markham would be deeply attached to Ethel Conway, the girl she hated most on earth.

At the present time, there was not the slightest

ground or foundation for such a persuasion in the conduct of either party : and yet she thought it,—and so did her mother !

And so did her brother George.

And, oddly enough, so did Mrs. Wreford.

And yet none of these worthies had interchanged thoughts on the subject. The only person who looked upon Jane's chance as a good one, besides her father, was Henrietta Gascoigne, surnamed "Harry." She, Harry, with that bewitching openness that formed part of her character, had declared to Jane that "if she would only make running, she might give a distance to every girl in the county, and win in a canter." But Jane preferred not breaking her heart in a race, to be beaten at last.

Between George Turnbull and Edgar, a rather curious friendship had sprung up, considering how different were the minds and education of the two. George declared that Edgar was the dearest friend he had, and told his mother that he thought him good enough for Ethel : which, considering he had an eye in that quarter himself, was immense praise.

"Why, just hear that man talk religion. I can listen to him by the hour, and if any of our fellows were even to speak the same words, I should tell 'em to hold their cant in three minutes."

And Edgar, on his side, would listen to George and seem just to draw out his oddities, without ridiculing them. He had, in reality, a great respect for the young man : for George had some very sterling qualities—though they were not much improved by the nature of his profession in the time of peace—and his principles, too, were good. He was not a genius, but might, in good hands, have been made a very useful member of society.

"Well, mother," said George, one day, in presence of his father and the eldest girl, who, of course, was deep in a book which she did not under-

stand, "my leave is drawing to a close; I must either say the word to Ethel shortly, or give it up as a bad job."

"Say the word, my boy," said his mother, "if it will be any comfort to you to think you have said it: but don't set your heart on the answer, if you value *my* peace of mind."

"Why not set his heart on the answer?" said the Vicar.

"Because the answer will be, No!" replied Mrs. Turnbull, sententiously.

"I don't see that," said the old gentleman, "the girl will marry, I suppose, some day, and I don't see whom she can get better. She *won't* leave Drelington, and there is nobody in the place but George and young Doolittle. Perhaps you think, Mrs. Turnbull, that she'd prefer him?"

"You forget that Ethel has consented to go with her aunt this year to Scarborough," said the old lady, evading the real reason for the sake of her son's feelings.

"Well, then, let him offer before she goes, and then get an extension of leave and go with her."

"It is not that, governor; it isn't her seeing any one at Scarborough; it isn't young Doolittle that makes me hesitate," said the young man. "It is—it's Edgar Markham I'm afraid of."

"Edgar Fiddlesticks!" replied his father; "what stuff have you two got in your heads now?" observing a corresponding shake of the old lady's head.

"Using those expressions, which I must say do not become a Clergyman of your years and standing, will make no difference in the fact," said she, with dignity.

"Well, let us hear what the fact is," returned he, "I am always ready for a mare's nest."

"There is no fact, nor mare's nest either," interrupted the young man. "It is this: I don't

say, mind, that it has entered into Ethel's head or Markham's either, yet; but I feel it here," pointing to his breast, "and mother, I see, thinks so too,—that Ethel and Markham will come together, and that before long."

"Then, man alive, offer before they get together, as you term it," said his father. "If it has not entered her head to think of him yet, your chance is all the better."

"I don't know that, father: there's many a girl who has never thought before of matrimony, will accept a man when he offers to her, because she knows by the smallest act of reflection that there is nobody else whom she would prefer to him. But Ethel would refuse me, from the simple remembrance that there is one other she would like better, though she never thought of marrying him before, and though there may be no present chance of his asking her; and in this case she would think of Markham."

"Well, George, you know your own affairs best, but they did not manage matters in this way in my time, and I confess I think it would be a bad look out for the girls, as a body, if all did so now. But just tell me—this secret of yours must be worth knowing,—judging of people's matrimonial tendencies before these things have entered into the heads of the parties themselves! Why, it would make a man's fortune on a race-course."

"It is very easy to ridicule, Mr. Turnbull," said the lady, "and you are so clever at it, that I have no doubt your success on a race-course would be certain in that capacity without this secret. Be kind enough, if you please, for this once, not to pretend you know nothing about it from me, when you hear that they are engaged," and the old lady, with her feathers much ruffled, left the room.

"Well, my boy, all I can say is, if I were you, I would not let a good chance slip through my fingers

for a fancy. I'll tell you what—I'll back for a small wager—giving you odds, mind,—I'll back your sister Jane against Ethel, for Mrs. Markham that is to be—there!"

"I'll take your wager, papa!" said the voice of his daughter Jane, who had entered the room by a door behind him unperceived, and had heard the major part of the conversation, "for I happen to agree with George and mamma that strange as it may now appear, Ethel and Mr. Markham will become attached."

"Oh! have your own way. I believe you are all cracked," said the Vicar, beating a hasty retreat.

Mrs. Wreford's opinion on this important subject was still more remarkable; but she had weighed the chances pro and con, and therefore had she been subjected to the cross-examination which Mrs. Turnbull underwent at the hands of her husband, it is probable she would have given far more reasonable, and therefore satisfactory, answers. Like George and his mother, she acknowledged that from the conduct of the parties it was unlikely (though she did not allow that this *must* be so,) that the idea had crossed the minds of either. But that, she argued, was the result of circumstances which were on the point of changing. The reasons why she believed that Ethel and Edgar would almost inevitably become attached, were, first, that the minds of each were drawn in the same direction on religious points.

Secondly, That both their characters were in the same degree superior in intelligence to those around them.

Thirdly, That they had each a peculiar fascination of manner calculated to attract the other.

Fourthly, That each,—though less on the part of Ethel, from her extreme simplicity of mind,—had a disposition to shun the other, as if from an instinctive knowledge of a result they could not control.

There were minor circumstances connected with all this, which pointed in the same direction. The impending death of Eva—his distress—the sympathy likely to be excited in Ethel's mind, &c., &c.

"Thank Heaven!" inwardly ejaculated Mrs. Wreford, "that I can take Ethel with me to Scarborough. After that the Colonel will be at Newlands, and if any mischief results, it will be his affair, not mine."

Why should Mrs. Wreford be in such dread of a possible attachment between Edgar and Ethel? She was her own mistress, and both the Colonel and his wife were bound by the promise they had given at the death-bed of Edward Conway, not to constrain her wishes except in matters of common prudence; and Edgar was a gentleman high in the estimation of his Bishop, and the particular pet and *protégé* of one of the proudest noblemen in the land. The answer is, that the Colonel intended to throw his niece among people where she could make a match that would advance his position in the world, and Mrs. Wreford knew it. Edgar, whatever his prospects were, was only now a country curate, and on her head would be the blame if this came to anything.

Still she felt it might be all nonsense, and merely her fancy, and therefore she would say nothing to the Colonel on the subject.

And Edgar and Ethel themselves—thinking of anything but of each other, and quite unsuspecting of the vast amount of forebodings they were creating in the breasts of others! He, worn with anxiety about his beloved Eva, more to him than life, counting the minutes which shortened the space allotted to her as his companion, passing nights in prayer for strength, and days in abstinence, for the purpose of ensuring himself self-control. She (Ethel) weeping out her heart on the breast of her,

who was her sister through the Church's teaching, utterly unable from her grief to preserve even a semblance of that firmness which had cheered in Callington so many humbler death-beds.

These were the elements from which the Vicarage and Newlands looked for a conflagration.

Much sympathy was shown him by the Earl of Tramontane. That nobleman, who in the few short months of his career had learnt full well to appreciate his worth, was sorely appalled at the calamity that was about to befall the young Curate. And so it often is in life; a distress which to ourselves from the callousness of our hearts, and the demoralization of our feelings by the world, we think of almost lightly, dismays us when we contemplate it befalling others of more delicate nervous structure, or of more simple and unartificial tastes. Markham, with his burning mind and sensitive feelings, always even in ordinary matters kept at a high strung pitch, with his affections centred on one earthly object, was positively an object of terror to the good Earl in respect of the approaching crisis.

"He will go out of his mind, as sure as fate," said the old man; and he never ceased devising plans to be of use against the evil day.

Eva, towards the end of the month of August, made a sudden rally of her strength, and during the fortnight it lasted, was able to take several short excursions in the neighbourhood with Ethel and the other two girls. She even on one Sunday played the organ at Drellington, during the evening service, when her brother was to preach there. It affected him severely, and it was as much as he could do to deliver his sermon. It was the last time he ever heard music produced by her hand!

At this period he preached often in Drellington church of an evening. The Vicar wished it (being lazy himself, and his Curate always being used up

by his afternoon sermon), and said his parishioners asked it as a favour; "and you know, Markham, it is no trouble to you to write sermons." Edgar of course saw through him; but if he gave satisfaction, he had no reason to refuse his compliance; indeed he owed a debt of gratitude to Drellington which he felt he never could pay, for the blessings his sister had received at the hands of its fairest daughters.

And the same reason induced him at that time to draw as closely as he could the ties of intimacy between himself and all parties in the village, the Vicarage especially. He never lost an opportunity of visiting there, nor of being civil to Mrs. Turnbull in particular, who like all those who fell under the powers of his fascinations, when he chose to exert them, never ceased to defend him against the smallest aspersion or suspicion, religious or otherwise. He tolerated Pander, paid Doolittle handsomely, laughed at Henrietta Gascoigne, and with an aching heart for Eva's sake appeared to be a man insensible to care.

One person whom he treated with marked attention was Pansy. After her generous kindness with respect to Holycross organ, to which she was now definitely attached, he began to turn over in his mind the prospects of this gentle little girl, and the result of his reflections was the deepest admiration and pity.

Educated so far above her original station, it seemed as if the advantages she had received were a disadvantage to herself. Nearly all out of Newlands who admired her for her good parts, looked down upon her for her birth. So that her education had placed her too high for her own rank in life; and her birth was not good enough to allow her to be more than tolerated in the rank to which her education entitled her. Markham never let an

opportunity pass without noticing her, and with the most marked respect.

Mrs. Wreford was glad to see this, and it comforted her in more ways than one. People who float in dismay on the sea of mental perplexity, like other drowners in a like difficulty, are apt to seize upon a straw, however weak and valueless. And she on this occasion seized upon the parody for all straws. "What a good thing," said she, "for Pansy, if the Curate in desolation at his loss and heart-broken at his prospects, was, while they were all at Scarborough, to look upon Pansy in a tenderer light than any one had ever dreamed of. Would it not, Ethel dear, be a charming thing for her, and such a reward for all her gentleness to his sister?"

Ethel did not answer, but she opened her large eyes, and for the first time in her life the conviction broke on her mind that Aunt Georgy was getting old, or she never could have evinced such an utter want of her ordinary penetration.



CHAPTER XI.

A SUNDAY SCHOLAR.

THE reader may perhaps feel curious respecting these accidental meetings, and these "walkings and talkings" between Markham and Jane Turnbull mentioned in the foregoing chapter, as well for their intrinsic worth as from their having caused such extravagant expectations in the Vicar's mind, and as it will serve to carry out still further the purpose of this story, one specimen of them shall be presented to his notice.

The state of Jane's feelings has been pretty well explained already. In common with the rest of Drellington she had come to acknowledge his worth, and as far as she could follow his religious principles, she knew in her inmost heart that she agreed with them; but she had been too long accustomed to play a part, to persuade herself to take up another all at once; she wished to keep well in his eyes, and yet she feared that she should be said to have abandoned the line of conduct she had hitherto pursued, from a desire to please one who would never be anything more to her than a friend.

There was one way, however, in which she could earn favour in his eyes, and in which he could help her on his side, without her surrendering one inch of the ground she had occupied.

It has been said early in this history, that Jane's

object since her childhood had been to be considered the *religious worker* of her family. It certainly was a bold aim where there were no workers of the sort at all, and where there were plenty of obstacles to the work, but no helping hand to aid her project. Utterly inexperienced herself, with a few ideas only, picked up during the visit she made to her school-fellow beforementioned, she had to begin her work with an assumption of knowing everything on the management of schools, and the visiting the sick, &c. On the latter point she soon picked up enough from Ethel Conway, who had been an adept in this way from infancy, and who was too glad to give assistance to any one in so holy a path, and too unsophisticated even to question their motives. But in the matter of schooling, Jane had mostly to rely on her own resources. Sunday-school there was not at Drellington. The Vicar did not approve of them. He had certain peculiar notions on the "day of rest," and he thought that schooling taught children to hate the Lord's Day. So he would not help her. It was a subject for thankfulness that he did not hinder her. The Curate for the time being, whatever his opinions, did not seem inclined to pursue a line of conduct antagonistic to his superior's views.

There was a Sunday-school at Holycross, but under Mr. Beaumont's direction it would hardly serve for a model. So Jane had enough to dishearten her at first. But only at first. To the glory of Drellington be it said, that the idea once started found a host of advocates, and at the period this history is commemorating, Drellington was possessed of a most flourishing Sunday-school, under the management of Miss Jane Turnbull. One misfortune only marked its progress to completion. Jane, as in other matters, had largely drawn upon the assistance of Ethel, and, as a natural conse-

quence, on that of Mrs. Wreford, whose excellent sense and influence proved of no small value. But Jane happened to be particularly jealous of the former, and was seized with continual apprehensions that the world would impute the success of the undertaking to Ethel rather than to herself. From what small commencement, or out of whatever trivial matter it arose, is immaterial, but certain it is that some unpleasantness arose, to obviate a repetition of which Mrs. Wreford withdrew her niece from the entire proceeding, which will account for her services being free at the present time, in the case of their being wanted for a similar institution at Holycross.

But flourishing as Drellington Sunday-school has been said to be, it was more so in the number of children and in the possession of numerous and respectable teachers than in its actual working. And herein it was that Jane thought that she could obtain assistance from Markham at the same time that she could earn his praise by following it. Her school would become as nearly perfect as it could be, she thought, and she would obtain all the credit for which she had been striving for years, without being obliged to change in one tittle those views she had so uncompromisingly advocated.

It was not long therefore after their acquaintance had been placed on a satisfactory footing, that she began taking Markham's advice on these matters. It took some time to make him completely understand in what position she actually stood with respect to the school, and at first they did not meet so often. Then his own duties, and the anxieties arising from Eva's state, preyed a good deal on his mind, so that it was not until Jane very earnestly and pointedly asked him to visit the school, that he became aware of the full interest she took in it, and that his advice and opinion would be anything more

than of general use. At first, however, he drew back; the Vicar's crotchets, his having no connection with the parish himself, &c., made him fear that interference would seem indelicate, even perhaps in the eyes of those with whom he most wished to stand well. But the Vicar had just then particular reasons for wishing Markham to take an interest in Jane; and on being informed by the latter that the former had some scruples of delicacy on the subject, he himself pointedly asked him to comply with her request, and offered to take his afternoon's duty at Holycross the following Sunday in furtherance of such purpose.

And now one or two of the leading peculiarities of the School will be necessary to make the conversation which followed on the subject intelligible.

In the first place there were a large number of teachers, or rather it should be said a large STAFF of teachers, for they never attended all together, or if they did, classes could hardly have been found, be they made very small indeed, for all of them. Most of the families of the place contributed some one. The two Miss Gascoignes, (Henrietta not often) all the Misses Warburton, Mrs. Kirk, Mrs. Pander, &c., and most of the respectable tradesmen, their foremen, some of the farmers' daughters, &c. Several *children* of both these classes were *among the teachers*. There was then this difficulty. The teachers did not attend regularly, and no class could count on having the same teacher two Sundays running, or even morning and afternoon. Another difficulty was that the teachers did not come punctually, and consequently the pupils did not do so either.

It will only be necessary to point out thus much: the other evils, many of which arose from these, will be evident from the conversation which ensued on the following Thursday afternoon, when

Markham met Jane on his return from the Vicarage, whither he had been to make a call. It was in one of the shady lanes that intervene between Callington and Holycross. Jane turned, as he expressed a wish to speak to her about the schools, and because she knew his time was not his own; and they proceeded onwards, walking slowly.

It must be premised, that Markham had been agreeably surprised by what he had heard of Jane's conduct in the management of these matters: that with such obstacles against her as existed in her own home, she should have done anything, betokened an amount of zeal for which he was unprepared; but when he considered the prosperous state of this school,—for the faults of it he looked on as the results of inexperience in the working of it—all of which, he had been informed, on all hands, was the result of Jane's perseverance, he was gratified beyond measure, and he expressed as much when he shook hands with her.

"Oh, I do not deserve such praise," she said, with a rich blush mantling her cheeks; and in this she felt what she said. "And then there is so much that you disapprove of. I saw it by your countenance on Sunday."

"I did not intend to express disapproval," he replied; "I saw great room for improvement: but to you, who vanquished such difficulties at first, this will be a little matter."

Great room for improvement! Her heart fell, she knew not why. He disapproved. If he had said so at the Vicarage! How she dreaded a repetition of his criticism on her return home!

"I do not know that," she answered suddenly, "if difficulties arise at home. Have you expressed your grounds of disapproval at the Vicarage?"

"I repeat, I do not disapprove," he returned, "and at the Vicarage I have expressed nothing."

Your mother asked me for my opinion, and I told her I reserved it for you."

"I am so thankful," she said, brightening up.

"Really," he said, smiling, "I think you do yourself injustice in thus dreading such trifles as the remarks which may be made at home. Remember, Miss Turnbull, if our motives be good, such obstacles are only meant to spur us on to further exertion. What would a prize be worth without a struggle?"

She only shook her head slightly, but did not speak, and he continued, "If this is not so, how can I make up my mind to speak of the school? Improvement is required, and in some points such improvement as I do not think, from what I know of the constitution of the parish, even you can effect. I am half doubtful whether I ought to speak at all—"

"Oh, pray speak," she said; "I am quite easy on that subject. Besides, the object of your coming was to tell us what was wrong."

"Well, I will tell you what I think; but you must bear in mind that my experience has been derived from very different places to this Drellington of yours, and one remark may be urged against all I advance, namely, that Sunday-schools are by no means used with the same objects at all places. I ground the observations that I shall make on the supposition that you mean *teaching* in your school."

"Can one mean anything else?" she said, in surprise.

"I hardly know how to say it," he replied; "but it certainly has seemed to me, when I have visited Sunday-schools in some localities, as if the teachers went to them as to a pastime, and the parents sent their children there to get them out of their own way, or to prevent them from spoiling their best clothes, which they would probably do if they stayed at home and played about."

"Well, certainly," said Jane, "I have known parents do the latter even here; but I have thought it no matter, if the children benefited thereby."

"And you are right," he said; "but you should correct this error in the parents."

"And have you any reason to suppose," she asked, "that the teachers look upon it as a pastime here?"

"I do not like to answer that question directly; for, supposing myself to fear that this is so, I would still rather hope that I am in the wrong. Still, I see one or two things that point that way. First, I see so many children-teachers, and teachers of those much their seniors, and, as far as I could judge, only because of their superior rank in life. Why is this so? You have plenty without them."

Jane seemed puzzled for a reply. "I really don't know," she said, "how this is. At first the teachers were all young—I myself was much younger than I am now—and I think that then the scheme was understood as a scheme set a-foot by young folk. I know that all mothers well disposed to it were anxious that their children should teach, and I suppose it was thus that we have come to have so many, and some of them so young. But have you not heard that some children make themselves better understood than those who are older?"

"Hum," said Markham, doubtfully, "I have heard something of the kind; but whether I believed it, or whether I set it down as an exception to a general rule, or as all nonsense, is beyond my recollection. But I'll tell you what I have heard, that parents refuse to send their children to school on this very ground, that they have 'a child for a teacher,' which, as a practical objection, settles the whole question. Well, then, they come, not exactly as a pastime, but because their mothers like the look of the thing. To my mind, their

being there won't advance the prime object of the school, unless you can get no one else. But for the grown-up teachers—how many of them may you have, Miss Turnbull?"

"I think we have about forty."

"And how many may have attended last Sunday?"

"Morning and afternoon, about twenty."

"In the afternoon I counted them," said he.

"In the boys' school were six, in the girls' school five, in the infant school three—total, fourteen. Where were the other twenty-six?"

"Oh, some take classes by turns."

"That I found out by the classes themselves."

"And some only come once a day."

"That is quite clear," said he, significantly.

"But would you have them all give up their whole day?"

"Do not you?"

"Yes; but they may not have the same reason."

"Is there any reason for tending CHRIST's lambs but one—His glory. Miss Turnbull, these teachers are not heart and soul in the work. If they teach not for a pastime, at all events they teach not from the true motive."

"I cannot think that men and women who work all the week can come for a pastime," said Jane.

"Nor I; but there may be other reasons, though that be not it. It is quite enough to say that they do not come for the only valid reason."

"But," said Jane, pertinaciously, "what other reasons?"

"I do not like suggesting improper motives," he replied; "it is bad enough to see the absence of the proper one. But as you do not seem to understand, I will start one or two that are possible, at all events. First, these people may come to gain your good word with the Vicar; some to earn a

character, with a view to any future situation requiring a testimonial,—‘A. B. was teacher at the Sunday-school so many years;’ some may come because you deal with them, and because they think they are doing you a service; some because they like you; some because it looks well; some because others do it. All of these, though they may be some of them not wholly vicious, and others not wholly devoid of merit, are not the *one only motive* that should actuate the teachers; and consequently none of these will make good Sunday-school teachers. Again, look at their unpunctuality, dropping in after prayers, ten minutes late, half-an-hour late. This should not be.”

Just at this moment George Turnbull, on his pony, appeared in one of the bends of the lane, coming towards them. Poor Jane showed evident trepidation. Markham tried to soothe her, but she only replied, “Oh, Mr. Markham, if you knew how he does scoff, whenever religion is alluded to even; and now he will know, that we are speaking on these subjects, and I shall have no rest all the evening.”

Markham knew that this was not strictly true, and felt grieved that she should speak so. He was convinced that George of late had, out of regard to him, quite ceased teasing his sister; but he took no notice of this, merely saying,

“And should we not be glad to suffer in such a cause? But indeed, Miss Turnbull, I think you are wrong in taking his former conduct (I thought it had changed of late?) so much to heart. If you do not feel yourself strong enough to reason with him, you should seem indifferent to his behaviour. Show yourself above it. Oblige me, now, by conversing on these topics without restraint in his presence. I have a further reason still which affects himself, so pray oblige me.”

“Why, who would have thought of meeting you

two here?" said George, in his good-humoured tones, with his grey eyes extended to the extreme limits of astonishment.

"Not you, George," said his sister, who, in spite of her late avowal, seemed to have a morbid fondness for hostilities, "not you, or you would not have taken this road home."

George was about to retort, but he caught Markham's calm, inquiring eye upon him, and he merely said, "Why not?"

"Because the subjects upon which we converse have little in them to attract you."

"Nay, Miss Turnbull," said Markham, determined to put a stop to this, "that is not like yourself. George may have had the distaste to religion you mention—he is not the first of us who some time in our lives have had to own the same. But I, for one, do not believe he entertains it any more, and as a proof, will venture to say he will join us gladly in our discussion. Will you not?" he added, to the young man, with one of his persuasive smiles.

"There are very few things I would not do for you," he answered, as he sprang from his horse and wrung the Curate's hands.

"I shall not take you any further, Miss Turnbull, this scorching day," said Markham, "and soon you would lose all shade. See, here are two or three felled trees, which offer a friendly resting-place. Sit down, and we will finish quietly what we had to say."

She complied, and Markham took a seat opposite to her. On the further side of the lane, George Turnbull took his stand, leaning against a gate, with his pony's rein over his arm, while the animal itself munched the short grass that grew on the road side. The green rich foliage of the trees, with the glaring sun shooting through at intervals; the sombre darkness of the lane they had traversed,

contrasting with the bright, golden country, lighted by an August sun in distant view in the other direction, made the present spot a very desirable one for a rest, before proceeding on their different ways.

"And what were you speaking of?" asked George.

"Of the Sunday school," said the Curate.

"Mr. Markham was libelling the teachers," said Jane.

"A parcel of humbugs," said George: "they are only teachers because they think it is fine."

"Don't say that of all," said Markham, unable, nevertheless, to repress a smile, "or use so strong a term to any. Perhaps there are very few in the world sincere on every point. I was only trying to show your sister that the teachers at Drellington were not heart and soul in their work, as they ought to be, or they would attend both regularly and punctually."

"And she was saying—?" asked George.

"She was charitably trying to make allowance for their backwardness, by urging that the weight of their occupations during the week requires rest and relaxation."

"Henrietta Gascoigne's occupations, for instance," said George, in a high state of merriment, "who teaches once a month, and then yawns so that none of the other teachers can go on."

"I only spoke of the tradespeople, George, who have need of rest," said Jane.

"Rest! nonsense!" said George. "If they have, why don't they stay away altogether? In my idea, no one has any business to be a teacher, unless he makes a teacher in the true sense of the word."

"I had no idea that you had ever thought on the subject," said the Curate.

"Thought! I don't see it requires much thinking to see that there is no one who really teaches in

that school but Christopher, Emma Gascoigne, and sister Jenny, there."

This last was not a bad idea on George's part.

"Well, but, Miss Turnbull," said the Curate, suddenly turning to her, "whatever be the reason for this coldness on your teachers' parts, what you have to look to is the result, and if that result be evil, then to the remedy. You have undertaken a great responsibility, and you owe a duty to God to discharge it. Now see. These habits of unpunctuality, in the first instance, among those who do attend, produce habits of the same kind among the pupils: for nothing is so contagious among the young, as a bad example. The consequence is, that these children must, by the mere force of habit, come to look upon the teaching as a sham—a sort of muster-roll, to show that all the pupils are there to answer to their names previous to entering church, and no more. You see I am taking it for granted that your children are there for the purpose of learning, or these objections fall to the ground. But the great evil which results from the teachers' irregularity in attending is, that there can be no uniformity in the teaching: and if there be not some sort of uniformity, nothing can be learnt. No two teachers ever imparted knowledge exactly alike; and be there the strongest similarity between any two, still the class which they instruct will take instruction more kindly from the one than from the other; or will listen to one and not to the other; or will get puzzled somehow between them: or will listen to neither, from an instinct that neither take any interest in the task they are performing. I am not now speaking of uniformity in the instruction itself, but merely uniformity in the mode of imparting it to any one particular class, which can only be obtained by one and the same lecturer. But at Drellington it is not a question

of two teachers to one class. In one instance, the boys told me that they had not had the same teacher twice for three Sundays, and counting two distinct periods of instruction to each Sunday that will make six lessons and six teachers. Is that so?

"I am forced to acknowledge that it is very likely," said Jane: "excepting the superintendent, I never can count upon more than five for certain; but then we have always a sufficient number, because if one intends to be absent another supplies his or her place."

"Herein lies the very evil which I wish you to see," said Markham: "and when you add to it another, the absence of uniformity in the thing instructed, it becomes of very great magnitude. I found on Sunday last, that the system was pretty much this: a teacher took a class, opened the Bible, selected a chapter according to his fancy, without reference to the day or anything taught the previous Sunday, and after they had read, explained it to them. Now taking the real Sunday-school scholars as distinct from the day scholars, as it is for them that the school is intended, what chance have you of impressing instruction on their mind, good and well conveyed as each individual lesson may be, without connection and with different instructors? It is much to hope, that from Sunday to Sunday everything taught will be remembered through all the work and distracting influences of the week, even where there is such connection; but where there is not, it must be nearly all time wasted."

"This is all very true," said George, who had been listening to his friend with great attention throughout; "but what Jenny wants is advice how to cure all this. To make your counsel worth a farthing, you must give her a remedy, Markham."

"Most true," said the latter; "or rather, I must

point it out : whether she can take it or turn it to account, depends more on herself and on the existing influences at Drellington than on me. The two great points in the management of a Sunday school, are discipline of the teachers and uniformity of teaching. On the motives, intelligence, and zeal of your teachers, depend the main hopes of your success. You must, so to speak, teach your teachers."

"How can you expect Jenny to do that?" cried George. "Would you have them preached to all in a body?"

"At first, no! Afterwards, yes," replied Markham. "What I propose sounds perhaps startling at the outset, but when you come to work it, all difficulties will melt away. Your sister cannot do what is wanted, it is work fit for the Clergy only; she must give up that part of the business to Mr. Christopher."

George turned away in impatience for the moment. He was half inclined to give vent to a sneer, but he knew that one great point in Markham's teaching was "reverence for God's minister from all," and he respected him too much to transgress it. But like many others, who look only on the surface, he thought meanly of His father's Curate Christopher, who though a timid, retiring, nervous man, of mean aspect and with bad health, had an excellent heart, and was ever desirous of doing his duty and showing the zeal he really possessed, though held back by his natural infirmities and an unfounded dread of always offending the Vicar.

"Don't turn away, George," exclaimed the Curate quietly: "I am not going to enter into a discussion on Mr. Christopher's qualities. It is enough for my purpose that he is a priest of the Church, and can assist your sister in those parts of

her task which require the aid of that office. No! Miss Turnbull, you will not have to preach to your teachers in a body, but you might just make a list out in your mind of those you consider the best among them, choosing as many as you can of those who have leisure during the week as well, and then beg Mr. Christopher to talk to them separately. Ask him to put before them the *real motive*, which if it actuate them at all, must claim their *whole service* in so great a work; and to press upon them what and where their reward will be—even this: ‘they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.’¹ These chosen, you will be able to regulate your classes, to identify each with its particular teacher, to instruct the teachers how to keep a list of their pupils, and to visit the families of their pupils from time to time, and so to make the classes feel they have an interest in their teacher, and the teacher as it were a sort of pride of possession in their pupils. And then again, you must have Mr. Christopher’s help. Let him one evening in each week give a teacher’s lecture, to which all teachers should be *morally* bound to attend, and responsible to you for not doing so. That lecture should be a rehearsal of what is to be taught the next Sunday. This will secure uniformity in the thing taught. How that will be imparted will in a great degree depend on each particular teacher; but no harm will result from any such dissimilarity in their teaching, if each teacher attends regularly and punctually.”

“But do you not think, Mr. Markham,” said Jane, “that if Mr. Christopher undertakes this part, he ought to undertake the whole?”

“No, I do not. In a Sunday school there are many minor details which the female superintendent can very well perform, and which are not of a

¹ Dan. xii. 3.

nature to require that the priest's time should be expended on them, when it is required for many matters of greater importance."

"Say something too on the course of teaching, Mr. Markham," said Jane, "and I will let you go; for I see you are impatient."

"No, I am not; but there are many things that demand my presence and attention elsewhere," he replied somewhat sadly; "as to the line of teaching, I ought not to give my own opinion. Pastors differ so much on this point. But as you ask it, I will only say, that each lecture should be conducted to make the children know the particular Sunday for itself and the lesson it conveys. Nothing so conduces to spread dissent, or rather separatism, as ignorance of the Church's liturgy and its meaning¹ among the children of the Church. You have to teach the Gospel. The Church has given you the means in the 'Book of Common Prayer.' Would you arrive at the end, do not despise the means. Teach everything through the Prayer Book."

"Well," said George, who had been listening during all this without making remark in the same position he had first taken up, "after all, I do not think it will be so difficult."

"Not if you will help," said Markham, quickly, and fixing his eyes on the young man's face.

"I!" said George; "who ever heard of a military man teaching in a Sunday-school?"

"I see nothing so ridiculous in it," returned

¹ "If we were to take the lessons which the Church teaches us Sunday after Sunday as so many independent precepts or expositions of doctrine, we should lose half their meaning.

"The Church's teaching is a regular course of theology, applied to the practice of daily life: half the significance of any one step in this course, is derived from those which led to it, and half its value from the fact of its being an exposition of those which follow."—*Newland's Seasons of the Church—Sermon for the Third Sunday after Trinity.*

the Curate. "I do not suppose you would teach in full regimentals; that would only serve to distract attention, instead of riveting it. But there are other ways in which you may assist. Depend upon it, George, the time is coming when all true Churchmen will gladly work, and work at the same time bitterly bewailing the mispent hours gone by."

"But," persisted George, in some alarm at the future which the Curate seemed to be forcing on him, "our profession makes us so ill-adapted to such work; and I should not like—indeed, I could not be the first."

"Both these positions I dispute," returned Markham. "There are many excellent Christians among the officers of the British army; many who, amidst pipe-clay and drill, can think on and pray for CHRIST's glory, and for the extension of His kingdom; many who would willingly show it, if you but give them the opening. George, be it your's to strike out the new path; you will not be long alone."

George seemed utterly confounded, and the Curate resumed,

"Work, George, is the watchword of the Church now; make up for lost time. Every one must gird up his loins now, and that right soon. We have had many warnings, the Church's severed unity, and of late, pestilence; who shall say what the next will be?"

It was with these words that they parted; the Curate towards Holycross, George and his sister homewards, the former walking by her side, and leading his pony. Strange to say, this walk, perhaps the first for a long time, passed without any sneer or difference of opinion between them. Neither of them spoke much, and what they said consisted of expressions of esteem and reverence for

Markham, and half-murmured observations on George's part that the Curate could do what he pleased with them all.

They parted near the stable at the Vicarage, with a smile of good-humour from both, expressive of perfect understanding on one side at least.

Oh, blessed seeds of Christian love! why will they not always take root when sown by His priests?

My readers may wonder why I have devoted so long a chapter to so well-worn a question as Sunday-school teaching. In truth, the lesson can never be too often taught. To our young must we look to repair the false steps, the backslidings of ourselves and our fathers. Teach them our liturgy, and they will, with the blessing of God, stem the tide which so relentlessly flows to the chapel doors of dissent and schism. Make them understand, and they will repair the wounds in His Body which apathy and ignorance *inherited* through generations have caused. But let us not tarry. All must work who love the Church. Have we not reason, we who have later experience, to acknowledge the truth of Markham's parting words? How many times during the last twenty years has the pestilence visited us? Who among us has not occasion to remember the bloody visitations of Alma, Inkermann, and the Cholera? Well-nigh had the triple visitation of David's time fallen upon us that year; but the third blow was spared, and that time God blessed us with a harvest such as these isles have never known.

Will He do so again, if we sleep?



CHAPTER XII.

ADIEU.

It is the third week in September, and the early leaves, the first fruits of nature's decay, have commenced falling. But decay itself—it is not yet. Nay! those little yellow flutterers which are wafted from the parent stems by the still light summer wind, are but the preparation for that decease, which is yet to come, yet to be shown in the fall of their sturdier fellows, when they shall be hurled to their last account by the winter blast.

And yet these little leaves, slight as their fall appears to us, whose autumn is the brightest season of our year of life, have, like all God's works, their lesson for our instruction. They speak that word in closing their career,—that word so often said in vain, in hopes, joys, visitations, seasons, changes, and chances, that word—*Prepare*. “We go,” they softly whisper, as gently floating on the summer breeze they pass from off our sight; “but you must come too. Oh, come with us now, when ye can come in peace, and let your end be, as is ours now; but if you stay, it will be only till the day, when all must come, when you too shall be torn from your world; remember us and our end; we go now; do you—*prepare*.”

And yet these leaves are not older by time than

their fellows, that they should go thus first; nor are they cut off in their youth and prime, and arbitrarily hurried thus early to their fate. They are yellow, while the rest are green, because they have lived their life, just as many of us run our career in shorter time than others, and though not so full of years, are not less full of living experience. There is no doubt that some live their allotted space in this world in one half the time that others do, and yet do not live less; and though when they fall, the outward clay may not show the wrinkling hand of age,—the mind, the vital power have both gone through their allotted course, have done their office as completely as in an older man. And so it is, that we see really so few instances of that often said sentence—"She or he was cut off in the spring of her days, in the prime of life, in the bloom of youth." Except in the case of violent deaths, or epidemic diseases, which come often enough to tell us of the uncertainty of life, such cases are indeed rare. If we die from long disease, the constitution undermined, we have lived our life,—no arresting of the scourge will restore the youth, the bloom, or the prime; we may hang on the tree of life, but even then we shall be as these yellow leaves. If we fall, our life aged by the shortening canker of intemperance, it is the same: life may be prolonged by the cause of the evil being removed, but the power of living is well-nigh gone; we are now but as these yellow leaves. And was not this so with Eva, when neither of these causes were at work? She was to die. Who can say that though she died at twenty-four, she died a whit younger than the halest, heartiest man who ever lived to the Psalmist's span? Ask of those who into few years of sorrow have crowded a life of experience; ask of those Sheffield grinders who, from the nature of

their labour, bear at thirty-five the impress of sixty winters, whether they count their days by time or strength, or hope, or fruition of life? Some of us are annuals, biennials, triennials; none of us perennials, none evergreens; but most who live, live their life and die, no older and no younger than they should die.

At what time Eva became aware that her course was nearly run is somewhat doubtful. She had been so long ailing; more or less, in fact, for the three previous years, that she might easily have become too used to her state to recognise a change, which was so gradually to creep upon her. At the Vicarage party at Drellington she did not feel it,—that may be almost taken for granted; and whether it ever crossed her mind during the following week at Newlands, may also be a matter of doubt. Her brother's solicitude was so well disguised as to disarm Mrs. Wreford herself, although a very fair discriminator in her way, and so completely to impose upon old Doolittle, that when that worthy prepared by means of a severe and carefully organised luncheon to break the prospect to him, he fully looked for an outburst of mental distress against the infection of which even he, Doolittle, required that his nerves should be fortified. At all events during the stay at Newlands, and even some time subsequently, the question may be difficult to answer. At about the end of July, however, a change in Eva's conduct certainly marked a change of Eva's feelings in some way. Hitherto she had shown a nervous dislike to her brother's making acquaintances in the neighbourhood, from some fancy that his affections, or at all events his society, might be weaned from her. No young lady desirous of keeping a fickle lover at her side; no young bride, greedy of her husband's every look, could have been more zealous on this

score than was Eva of Edgar. An instance of it I think I related on the first occasion when the two were presented to the reader's notice. About the time I now mention, this tendency became suddenly reversed. Nothing would suit her but that he should accept every offer of kindness, meet every civility. She would have quartered him in the house at Newlands, while she died, if she could have managed it, but unfortunately, in this particular arrangement, he showed not the smallest inclination to fall in with her views. She would have him meet half way all the cordial sympathy, which was now shown him on all sides.

The reason of this change was probably her knowledge of her own approaching decease, which made her, in her dire distress as to his probable state, when she was gone, fasten on every plan that would find him comforters and supporters in that hour of agony. Poor gentle Eva, ever the unselfish and sympathising, what schemes and plans tormented that heart at a time, when all should have been of the calmest, most unbroken serene. What would become of him, she reasoned from the case of what would have become of her, had the positions of the two been reversed. She knew her worth to him, who had been all to her—who was to be at his side, what she was? No wife could do that, for their affections had been cemented, had been rather welded together by the hard hammer of joint misfortune; no wife's love could make so firm a union. She thought of Ethel—no not Ethel, dear and unworldly as she was, could be that. Hard, hard indeed, that these last hours of the young sister's life,—hours, which to have been in unison with her gentle spirit should have been passed in the soft light of Christian resignation, were passed almost in a delirium of agonising thoughts for his weal, whom she was to leave behind. Alas! she had

well said, that she loved her brother to idolatry, and its bitter punishment was upon her.

"Eva, what is it to-night? You are so feverish and excited. Eva, dear, don't cry so; what have you to cry for? you, the good, the loved Eva; 'tis for others to mourn, Eva, not you."

So said Ethel, alarmed and aghast at what seemed of daily occurrence, and her large eyes spoke more than she said.

And for a moment Eva would be quiet, when with a toss, as if she was in pain, she would turn and say, "Oh! Ethel, I am not fit to die—I cannot die—I cannot go—Ethel, keep me—keep me from death."

Ethel's tears fell on her; she had seen death-beds among the poor in various shapes; but where she expected serenity, resignation, everything that a dying Christian should be, here was a continued torture of mind, fretfulness, positive dread of dissolution, and not at mere intervals, but extending sometimes over days. Then she would caress her, and soothe her, and ask her to confide in her Ethel, who had loved her and worshipped her as her better pattern. How could Ethel ever dare to meet her GOD, if Eva feared to die?

"Ethel," again broke out the sick girl, "I love this life too much—oh! so much, so much!" and she finished in such a low and bitter cry.

"You are dreaming, Eva, I am sure you are dreaming; it is some sleepy medicine Dr. Doolittle has given you; you shall have no more of it," said the other. "Eva, do please be calm;" you'll break my heart if you go on so. What will your brother think of you if he comes in; he'll be ashamed of Eva."

"Ethel—it is for him—it is the thought of Edgar that makes me so mad." And the slight feeble frame, that seemed worn and emaciated by debility,

heaved again with her sobs,—“ Oh my brother, what will he feel? who will shield him from the hard, hard world? and it has been such a hard world to him, Ethel. Edgar, my brother, lamp of my life, come too, come too, I cannot go alone.”

A light broke in on Ethel's heart. The words at their first meeting,—“ He is my idol—all idolatry is sin.” But what was the mysterious bond of such a unity as this love, this idolatry. Around her in Drellington there were families, and brothers and sisters among them; but as she ran them over in her mind, it was difficult for her to say, whether there was more of disagreement or of concord among them; and here between these two, the two, whom in their vocation she looked on as examples to herself and all in the place, this was the love, and this its bitter results.

“ Ethel,” said Eva, in a low voice, after she had been quiet for a few moments. “ Have you ever been in love?”

Ethel blushed scarlet, not from consciousness, for she never had been, but from surprise at the question. “ Never,” she replied.

“ Then never be,” said the other solemnly. “ Never, as you value your happiness here or hereafter, *be in love*.’ You will find happiness here, and yet whatever it is, happiness or not, you will dread to leave it. Oh, Ethel, never love.”

“ Eva, when you are gone,” said the weeping girl, for this scene completely overcame her, “ what will there be left for me to love?”

And then Eva was seized with a desire to implore her to do just the contrary; to beseech her to love Edgar; to marry him, and comfort him; but she thought—no, he would love her dearly, and she would worship him; and then idolatry again. And besides, she knew the high view he held of his sacred office, and how entirely he de-

sired to give himself up to its duties; and she doubted whether marriage might not be a hindrance to him, so she remained silent. Then after a pause, she began again.

"Ethel, you are born to love and to be loved, if you ever laid a lesson to heart, lay my words there now; make not your love your idol; love the object not for its own sake, but because GOD gave it you; not because you deserve happiness from its possession, but from gratitude to the Giver, then when you lose it, you will not feel its loss.

"Eva, dear, love was commanded to us."

"Every thing, every blessing, that has been given us to enjoy," said Eva, "becomes a calamity, if its enjoyment be abused, and most so, in those blessings, which seem purest in the intention, in which they were given. 'Love one another,' said our SAVIOUR, but hear the conclusion; not selfishly, 'but even as I have loved you,' never when it interferes with our duty to GOD."

"Oh, Eva, dear Eva, I shall never love any one again when you are gone."

(I wonder if Ethel remembered these words four months later.)

And yet, reader, Eva's state of feeling is not so rare in the world, though you may not have seen circumstances precisely similar. She had set her love entirely on one object, because she had but one object to love; there are those that have husband and children, and perhaps brothers and sisters to love as well, but there the feeling is divided and spread among all, instead of being concentrated in all its intensity on one; and if one is taken in that case, the others remain. Idolatry is but the prostitution of pure worship and adoration. It can no more exist in its intense state on two or more objects, than worship and adoration can be with sincerity offered to more than one. Eva is an in-

stance of it in its intensity, a rare example in this world, where man bows down not to any image, but to every image oftentimes which his fancy or his passions set up.

But let me not be understood to say, that because idolatry such as Eva's, can only exist in respect of one idol, therefore there is no other idolatry equally as stubborn. The whole world points out that there is such, as stubborn and more selfish. Eva bowed down before an idol, which at all events reflected back a portion of the worship she offered it, namely, its love for hers. Mankind now-a-days, like the Israelites of old, worship "what if it have eyes sees not, ears hears not, neither openeth its mouth." In their case, it was a stock, a stone, a brazen calf, an image of some bird or beast. In ours, it is some beast perhaps in fancy, or some winged superstition, that leads to any flight of absurdity or fanaticism, but inasmuch as the homage rendered to it is empty, it reflects back as empty a return.

This short history, I think, exemplifies pretty well what I mean. The idolatry of old was palpable, and when we read of it now, excites our scorn. The idolatry of the present day pervades every action, sometimes every thought of our lives, but is not apparent and excites no attention at all. Every day we hear people declaim against the superstition of Popish idolatry; they little think that superstitious horror of a fancied idol is idolatry as well; that he who bows down before an empty superstition is just as much an idolater as he is a superstitious man who bows down before the idol itself. Take the case of Edward Conway,—never was there a greater instance of idolatry. You will say, yes! of his child. Not so! his idol was the dread image of his own fancy, which he set up on the occasion of her birth and of his wife's death.

The image of the fear of Rome,—it haunted him night and day for years; he sacrificed to it, offered to it the incense of his comforts, his night's rest; even for a short time the peace of his death-bed. He never was happy, not even what the world calls happy. And could his idol have repaid him? Never; and for the simple reason that it would never have been satisfied at the worship it received. It would always have demanded more—more night's rest, more comfort, &c., and so on, and would have given nothing in return. And the cause of all this was the cause of all superstition the whole world over since all time. *Ignorance*,—Edward Conway was ignorant of the history of his Church,—ignorant of the actual meaning and results,—ignorant of his Prayer-book, of the Seasons of the Church, of her Lessons, of her Sacraments, and of her other Ordinances.

And Drellington collectively, did not she set up an idol? She was ignorant enough in all conscience: could not she find any absurdity to worship? Of course she could, and did. But Drellington was so divided between slander and creature comforts, that her homage, to whatever idol offered, was weak. As I told you before, the intensity of the worship is in an inverse ratio to the multiplicity of the idols. Still she was quite ready to cry out like the rest about Rome. Had the seven men who stood on their consciences, not walked into Church too late on the occasion of Markham's first sermon, the image might have been set up with due pomp. But we know that they WERE too late, and so the village set up the young parson himself, and worshipped him in its stead.

It must not be supposed that these outbursts of distress on the part of Eva, were of too long a duration, and particularly at the later period of her illness. She had been too well brought up,

and was too deeply imbued with the religion she professed, not to know that she was wrong in repining against "the cup she had to drink." That they were strong in such a girl, proves how even the best natures trained in the only religion that ever brought peace of mind with it, is unruly if it have love for any other than its "SAVIOUR CHRIST," and that as she herself told Ethel, nothing can be properly loved in this world, except as it be loved in respect of the Giver. Taken in this light, everything is capable of bringing joy to man, taken in the reverse, the purest enjoyments result only in bitterness.

Ethel's affection for Eva may be considered unnatural, and will undoubtedly seem so to those who do not look at the character and bringing up of the former, as well as at the circumstances which brought the two together. It must be remembered that Ethel was an orphan who brought to the aspect with which she regarded everything in life a certain colouring of her own; through the medium of this she saw everything, and nothing interested her unless it was capable of being adapted to it, that is, to *her religious hopes*. For years this was embodied in the towers of Gramford Minster, and its mysterious interior: she heard the Vicar speak of *the Church* in his sermons at dinner, after dinner, and on all occasions; what it was he never explained, though her fancy with this one colouring built it in various shapes. She punished him rather on the subject previous to her confirmation, but the result as represented in the services, lessons, seasons, and ordinances of Drellington, was in the highest degree unsatisfactory. This colouring she carried to Holycross, gave a touch or two to it of a brighter tint, before applying it to Eva, and finding the two blended, loved the picture with all the warmth and aspirations of her young yearning

heart. One idea which had long possessed her was, to be a true daughter of the Church,—and Eva was her model; she had one day read those pretty verses of Coxe's, entitled, "The Church's Daughter," and commencing,

"Oh! woman is a tender tree,
The hand must gentle be that rears,
Through storm and sunshine, patiently,
That plant of grace, of smiles, and tears," &c.¹

And Eva was her pattern. She might be, if she tried, *one* of the Church's daughters, but Eva was "The Church's Daughter." Can it be wondered that such a girl, who had no strong tie of any consequence on earth, should in her turn have set up her idol and worshipped Eva?

And she did worship her. Anything so good, so accomplished, so loving to that brother, of whom she seemed a part, even Ethel's fancy had never pictured. In the days when she believed Eva was to remain on earth like herself, she had planned to have her always at Newlands, or to be always with her at Holycross; to have learnt all her accomplishments, though it cost her the severest toil (for Eva was accomplished); to have prayed with her, laughed with her, loved with her: and now Eva was on that journey homeward whither as yet Ethel could not go. It was no idle saying on her lips when she said, "Oh! Eva, when you are gone I shall never love again."

It was, as I have said at the commencement of this chapter, in the third week of September, and Eva had been lingering in her helpless state, carried by her brother from the drawing room to her room and back again as occasion required, for some time past; on the previous days she had seemed

¹ Coxe's Christian Ballads, "The Church's Daughter."

so near her last moments, that the Holy Sacrament had been administered to her.—“Sacred rite,” so life-giving to all; and at such times so full of consolation to those who are to be left behind!—Ethel had taken up her abode at Holycross much to the discomfort and perplexity of Mrs. Wreford, who with her niece and daughter was anxiously expected by the Colonel at Scarborough, and who might as soon have thought of carrying all Newlands with her as Ethel at this juncture. It was, then, in the third week of September, on a stormy, gloomy afternoon, though without rain, that Eva woke from a deep sleep and looked anxiously round. Ethel was at her side in a moment.

“Where is Edgar?”

“He came in a moment ago, and I was to call him when you woke. I’ll call him now.”

When he came, Eva for a moment took no notice of him, as he looked inquiringly at her, but turning to Ethel she held up her arms feebly to her, for she was very weak; Ethel bent down her head, and she taking it with her hands said, as she kissed it, “Sister—” that was all.

Edgar then came to her with that cold choking in his throat, which perchance some among my readers may know, for an appalling dread was on him. He sat down beside her, and slightly raised that form—alas! now how thin—in his arms, while her head fell on the bosom where it loved to rest.

“Four years, Edgar, have I been blessed—but soon—you and I—and (this word was inaudible) will be—more blessed.—Edgar, my brother!”—and on that bosom she fell asleep.

* * * * *

The funeral was attended by Edgar, by his elder brother, Robert Markham, Esq., of Boxholme Park,

near Aylesbury, Bucks, Dr. Doolittle, and George Turnbull, as mourners. The custom, which it is to be hoped is rapidly becoming extinct, of women not attending funerals, was still rigidly enforced at Drellington, and Ethel did not venture even to propose being present, intensely as she desired it. We must trust that when there is a deeper and more general realization of the doctrine of the Holy Sacrament in connection with the Resurrection, as implied in those words of our LORD, "and I will raise him up at the Last Day," the celebrations at funerals will be much more frequent; and then women will not be debarred from the deep consolation afforded by the beautiful Burial Office, thus crowned by the Sacramental union with the Risen LORD and those who are asleep in Him.

The Vicar of Drellington rendered the service, and as he did all things when his better feelings were roused, or when he put his mind to it, rendered it well; the brother—the inquired of by Doolittle, the speculated about by the Vicar, the gossiped of by Jeremiah Bate—was much affected; not so Edgar, he only showed that dull odd frown, of which Jeremiah on a former occasion did not like the look. After the funeral, he started with his brother in a carriage to accompany him as far as Gramford.

* * * * *

The same evening at sunset two young female figures stood by the newly made grave; both brought a small wreath of flowers to place upon it. The taller of the two was convulsed with grief, and it well nigh broke the hearts of the simple rustics, already moved no little themselves, to see her bow down upon the earth in a burst of passionate sobs. Who knows but perchance the spirit of the dead was there, and kissed the tears as they fell?

Mourn not, Ethel—mourn not for her that is gone; the days are coming, when a deeper mourning shall arrive for thee,—when thou shalt find no tears to shed,—when the fountains of the heart shall be as dry as the parched ground that now drinks up those burning drops!

* * * * *

The following morning Mrs. Wreford, Angelica, and her two younger children, started with Ethel for Scarborough. Pansy for the first time, except on one slight occasion, did not accompany her sister; there were tears on both sides as Ethel entered the carriage, but Pansy had offered to remain, as she knew how necessary her services were at Holycross, and both were tolerably resigned, for they had learnt from the late sad parting, that in this world such things must be.

About a fortnight after they had been at Scarborough, Mrs. Wreford received a letter from Edgar, stating that acting on advice he was passing two months with his old superior at Morlington. He touched but slightly on his late bereavement, merely mentioning it to say that in obedience to his sister's wishes he had forwarded two small tokens of her affection for Miss Conway's and Miss Wreford's, as well as one for her own acceptance, and had placed aside something of a similar nature, with the same view, for Miss Miller. Begging them to accept the feelings of gratitude for all their goodness, which he had not the power to utter, or even on paper to express, he remained, &c. &c.

"Seems a sensible man," said the Colonel, when he had read the letter, "and has judiciously selected the trinkets; but for all that, Georgiana, I wish you had never encouraged the intimacy between that dead girl and Ethel, for she won't get over it till we are gone, and I had made up my

mind upon showing her off here. She is not fit for anything."

Mrs. Wreford made all the excuses that a woman could make, and that the circumstances suggested, but the Colonel was crusty on the subject.

"Where is she now?" said she.

"Oh! moping somewhere on the sands," was the reply; "detecting her friend's face in the clouds, or her voice in the wind. I have half a mind to send for Pansy for her."

His wife devoutly hoped he would not; that would be a blow to Edgar, incapable as he was now of exertion, to have to try to supply her place, with all those recollections forced upon him at every moment during the process.

Luckily the Colonel did not. For from Scarborough they went on a visit to some friends in Warwickshire, where Pansy would have been rather in the way.



CHAPTER XIII.

MOPEDOM.

I SAID in the last chapter, that Edgar Markham went for a few weeks to Morlington, to pay a visit to his old Rector, and ostensibly he did so; in reality he made a much longer journey,—for after parting with his brother on the day of the funeral, and on returning to his own desolate home, he had straightway packed up all his ordinary occupations, reflections, and hours of study, and was off to that very uninteresting country, Mopedom, where he proposed at that time making a considerable stay. Some of my readers may have been there also, and others may fancy they have made the journey, though in truth they have only extended their tour as far as the neighbouring principality of Boredom, which lies between it and the ordinary circle of man's travelling propensities, and differs widely in the features of interest which it offers to the traveller; (through this Boredom Edgar passed rapidly, without making any stay, to the more distant country of Mopedom;) for the information then of the latter, and of those who have never been to the locality in question at all, and perhaps only known of its existence by chance hearsay, the following particulars may be interesting.

Mopedom lies to the north-east of all man's prospects, hopes, and affections, and is a favourite

place of resort for all those who have suffered in the loss of these adjuncts to human existence by a sudden and severe blow. It has nothing whatever attractive in either its scenery, its comforts, or its productions; the sun never shines there, but the colour of the sky being of a fixed, never varying grey, it gives the same tint to everything which it covers, living or dead. The trees beget fruit and flowers as in other countries, and the ground brings forth the ordinary produce of the earth, but none of these ever come to perfection, and perhaps from want of the sun's warmth at the time they should be ripening, they either fade away, or crumple up, or wither, or fall to the ground, for one hears and sees no more of them; and yet the inhabitants labour for these things as in other places, though clearly without any expectation of a successful result to their labours, and without repining at the absence of such result. Every exertion, whether of the senses, or of the strength, or of the mind, is *mechanical* with them; the affections being in a torpid state in this cheerless climate; they hoard up riches in the usual employments which attach to human life without emotion; they spend them without emotion, they leave them to their successors without emotion, who inherit them without emotion; and yet they must be gifted with some sort of feeling, for the people from highest to lowest carry on them the same hopeless aspect of weariness, against which however they are too patriotic to complain. There are churches in Mopedom also, and the people frequent them as mechanically as they do other things, but they never pray, that is, except with their mouths—with their hearts, never! I have sometimes thought, that but for the bright colours of the ladies' ribbons Drellington church might have passed muster in Mopedom in this respect; if a person were to pray in Mopedom he would be im-

mediately exiled from the country, and perhaps not a bad thing for him too.

Nearly all the inhabitants of this favoured spot are colonists from other lands, there being literally nothing indigenous to the soil which has the power of procreation. Nothing brought to maturity there bears fruit, not even human life. The population is migratory, few die there, and for that reason I suppose there are no burial grounds, and when they do die there, which does sometimes happen, their friends in other lands fetch away their remains to inter them in their own country. It is right to say, that the only chance of a person dying in this inhospitable climate is his extending his stay there over too long a period, when the same atmosphere which blights all the produce of nature makes his life to wither likewise.

Mopedom, then, reader, is the country whither those suffering from some stunning blow of affliction or misfortune invariably travel to find a relief, which of course they never do find there; and where they as invariably remain until something befalls them which strikes the affections, or turns them to seek the only passport for a safe return from that inhospitable region, in prayer; this offers the surest mode of return, because through it the return is complete.

Some may wonder that such a man as Edgar Markham should not have resorted to this resource in the first instance, without making the journey at all; of course he did, but all the time he was seeking the passport he was making the journey. He prayed, but his heart was stunned; and his prayer, like the prayers of Mopedom folk, was mechanical: when the heart began to recover from the insensibility produced by the blow, which was not for some time, and then only by slow degrees, true real prayer came to his relief, and he was politely

escorted to the frontier of the principality, and dismissed.

From this it will easily be seen that Edgar Markham's great temptation lay in the strength of his affections, which sincere in everything, he had never been accustomed to control, therefore he lived in Mopedom, and though moving ostensibly in Morlington was actually *there*. He saw his friends mechanically, received their sympathy mechanically, helped them in their duties mechanically, with the same good will, but with the same hopeless aspect of weariness, which characterizes a true citizen of that state. Ah! reader, have you never been there too? happy for you if you can say no! for the journey and the stay, even after the return, leaves marks upon men often, which they carry to their grave.

Eva had been beloved at Morlington as in other places, and her death was mentioned with grief and respect by many a homely hearth there also; no wonder, then, that the humble too came forward to condole with the Curate, when they saw him in his old haunts; every poor man's house manifested in some way its silent sympathy. All this was torture to Edgar. He had come to Morlington at Lord Tramontane's urgent request, who thought that solitude would send him out of his mind, and whose hope was that a crowd with its never failing sources of attraction would shake off the lethargy which had fallen upon his young friend, even if those sources failed to amuse. But Edgar's loss had been too recent for him to stay at Morlington without the keenest suffering; if he said prayers in the old church, his thoughts were in the seat in which *she* used to sit; if among the poor his eye recognised an old friend, it was in reference to the time when *she* likewise addressed him too; every one who spoke to him showed by their looks that

they were thinking of *her*, and pitying him; all told of *her*, and only *her*:—and yet Edgar bore it, and stayed six weeks in this state of torture, because he cared very little where he was, and because, if he suffered, he remembered the lessons of submission which she had taught him, and that man is sent on earth on purpose *to be taught to bear*.

In spite of all this the restless mind was not without some resource, and such a resource as it loved most to seek. At the time George Turnbull left Drellington, as it has been before intimated he would, his regiment was under orders for some of the manufacturing districts, which, it was understood, were then in a disturbed state. In course of time the route came, and George found himself in Morlington, not without some curiosity, for he associated it somehow inseparably with Markham, who was about the only person he had heard regard it with favour.

Markham had been a short time in Morlington before George knew of his arrival there. The position of the castle barracks in relation to the parish of S. Bartholomew, of which the former had once been the curate, being somewhat indistinct in the eyes of military men of the ordinary stamp, George found it difficult at first to discover where his friend could have worked, and he might have given up the search in despair but for a letter from his sister, now a kindly correspondent, informing him of the crisis which we all now know, and of Markham's being the inhabitant at the moment of that very town of which he had the honour to form a part of the garrison.

It pained George much, this first meeting with the mourner. The quiet, melancholy, suffering smile, and yet the warm nervous pressure of the hand, which told the still true interest for the person greeted; the never-mention air of that first

conversation; the continual turn of the topic in hand to inquiries about him, George, "as if," thought George, "there was not much more to ask about, and talk about respecting him than me;" the "come and see me again, George," as if nothing had happened, and the parting. A meeting with no result he thought, and he was angry with himself for being so stupid. Nevertheless he would have liked to have said a few words of sympathy, but he could not.

Never fear, George Turnbull, the meeting was not without result.

Not without result, because the superior officer of his regiment, a certain Major Dalton, had become interested in George's description of his friend, and had pressed George to make this first visit; this same Major was a painstaking, but somewhat wavering disciple of CHRIST, who wished to see and hear for himself, whether Markham could do all that George said as to instructing the ignorant, reducing the erroneous, and making steady the vacillating.

Perhaps Markham's only true happiness during the six weeks of penance he suffered in this place, was this acquaintance and its results. Those words, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word," were the constant hope of that half bereaved life. "Sanctify all that is in me to Thy glory," was still the outpouring of his blighted heart.

"Mr. Markham," said Major Dalton, after they had become thoroughly acquainted, and after he had once or twice attended the service at S. Bartholomew's, "you cannot think how glad I am to receive instruction. I have been many years in the East Indies, serving with various regiments; and coming home, as I do, to find every Christian at variance with the other about what seem to me idle

forms, it really is something to meet with a Clergyman who will explain to me what is the difference that really makes these parties. What you have said just now about the Sacraments, really is most instructive."

"And yet you seem to have known the true meaning of the Sacraments all along, from your conversation. You acknowledge them as means of grace."

"I have always so believed them. But I confess I have been led to believe that there is a party that wishes to strain their meaning to that which Rome holds, and which we held formerly when we were with Rome."

"The difficulty, Major Dalton," said Markham, "which I have always to meet in my exertions, is not to get people to believe anything which approaches Romanist doctrines, but to prevent them from believing that the most innocent essentials of our Church are not Romanist. That difficulty arises from the never-to-be-eradicated idea, that we seceded from Rome. Never was there a greater mistake. If there was any secession at all, it was that Rome seceded from us. *In fact, there was no secession on either side, because both Churches hold the same principles of Apostolic Faith.* Rome retained abuses that had crept in; we cleansed ourselves from them: in other respects, we should be the same. Remember, Major Dalton, this point—it should never be lost sight of, because it is a fixed part of Rome's argument now, that we differ from other schismatics in no other respect, than that we retain the Episcopal Establishment, which they do not. We were and are, as they are, the Apostolic Church of CHRIST. Nothing could be more natural than that Rome, from her early position as mistress of the world, should lay claim to the greatest consideration in temporal matters, and that uncivilized

nations should look to her as mistress in spiritual ones also, as the Church there increased in size and importance. Error crept in. England, in purging her Church of it, retained nothing which belonged peculiarly to Rome, which was not also the common property of every branch of the Apostolic Church. Rome remained in corruption. We returned to the old pure light."

"But what becomes of the Church of the Reformation, Mr. Markham?" said Major Dalton.

"I know of no Church of the Reformation," returned Markham. "If there be such a Church, it must be the result of a popular movement, and not the Church. You know as well as I the meaning of the word Reformation. How can a Reformation make a Church? It may cleanse a Church, and by the blessing of the HOLY SPIRIT renew a Church, but how can it make one?"

"You will allow, nevertheless, that the Church of England is called the Church of the Reformation?"

"I will allow nothing of the sort. If I allow the existence of such a misnomer, it is because I must allow so much more that is wrong, and careless, and cold among her children."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Markham, putting names aside, are there not practices, or forms, or decorations,—even tenets, doctrines, if you will, advanced by the Tractarian party which are Romanist, and Romanist essentially?"

"No, Major Dalton, by the Tractarians as a body, there are not. Individuals may indiscreetly or intemperately have overstepped the line, but as a body the Tractarians have advanced nothing in doctrine which the immediate successors of the Apostles did not hold. Ornaments depended, in England, often on the particular diocese, and Rome, by adopting any particular pattern of altar-cloth, would just as much have laid herself open to the charge of being An-

glican, as we, by restoring them, to the charge of being Romanist."

"Show me, then," said the Major, "the points of likeness to which you refer between the two Churches, which are Apostolic, and not essentially Roman."

"Read the Prayer Book," replied Markham. "Look at the Seasons of the Church, as regulated by her in our Liturgy. Advent, Epiphany, Lent, &c., derived equally by each from the Apostles, whom we believe to have observed them, and on the authority of those early Fathers whom most men allow to be the best interpreters of the acts and writings of the first followers of our LORD. These are part of the primitive teaching of the Church. They are neither Romish, nor Greek, nor Anglican, but they are Apostolic, and belong to all."

"As I understand you, then," said Major Dalton, "you would maintain that none of the innovations which the Tractarian party desire to introduce are Romanist, but Apostolic."

"If they be innovations, the Tractarians have no desire to introduce them. In that word "*innovation*," lies the issue of the whole struggle. Who are the innovators? Those who affirm the Sacraments to be means of grace, or those that affirm them to be memorials only? those who maintain the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, which was never denied, or even questioned by any branch of the Church for eighteen hundred years, or those who now question it?"

"You always get me to doctrine, Mr. Markham, where you have me at a disadvantage. These ornaments, altar-crosses, credence-tables—were they Apostolic?"

"You do not seriously wish me to tell you whether the Cross be the sign of a sect or not," said Markham. "Respecting mere ornaments, the

question simply is, whether such were in use in this Church of England, by authority of Parliament, in the second year of King Edward the VIth. There is ample authority for believing, that not only were they so in this reign, but also in those of Elizabeth, James I., and both the Charles's. At the same time, whether this be so or not, this is the ground on which the High Church party maintain their restoration, and not in the least degree from a love for Romanist worship."

"How then do you account for these things being discontinued after the reigns of the two Charles's?"

"The answer is in the Revolution of 1688," said Markham. "The youngest student in history knows that with this commenced that reign of religious apathy and neglect of the Sacraments, for which schism in its present hundred forms is but a just punishment."

"You are coming back again to doctrine," said Major Dalton.

"Because the real grave points at issue are in doctrine, in the Sacraments; and indeed many of the forms in dispute clothe or illustrate a doctrine,¹ and one can hardly discuss the one without coming to the other."

There was a pause, when Major Dalton resumed, "I confess your views give the question a very different aspect; but after all, your opponents might say, that your argument only amounted to this,—'that our Liturgy is copied from Rome,' and they would consider that a reason for reviving nothing more which came from the same source."

"At that rate they must deny the efficacy of the movement on which they take their stand—the 'Reformation;' they must consider that the signing of the Cross in Baptism, the laying on of hands in Confirmation, the form of the visitation of the sick,

¹ Vide note at the end of the chapter.

nearly the whole service of the Eucharist, were wrongly retained by the Reformers, and indeed were copied from Rome, as they are precisely similar in both Churches."

"And what would you say to that?"

"I should deny that they were copied from her. They were really a continuation, not a copy, of *the rites of the English Unreformed Church*."

"Then tell me, I pray, what there is in Rome, to which you might not apply the same reason for following?"

"Put the question rather in this way," said Markham. "What is there in Rome, peculiar to Rome, which England, in returning to Apostolic purity, did not or might not have retained?"

"Well?"

"I answer, the Adoration of Relics, the Invocation of Saints, the doctrine of Indulgences, and such like. Now can you charge the Tractarians with trying to introduce any such doctrines as these?"

"But there is the Real Presence," said George.

"Which no one knows better than you is not the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation, but that Apostolic doctrine of the Presence, held not only by the early Christians, but by the early Reformers, who represent *the real meaning* of the Reformation, and some of whom sealed that meaning with their blood. True, again, they advocate the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, not as a Romish doctrine, but as a fundamental doctrine of the Church. *It is only those persons who consider the Church of England to be like the Church of Calvin, the offspring of a schism*, that aver this doctrine to be Romish."

"I suspect that some people would say that the Reformation did not go far enough by half," said Major Dalton.

"The word Reformation," returned Markham, "as well as that great movement itself, is very loosely understood in the present day. It really means what its literal signification purports; but it seems to be considered as synonymous with the term 'reform' in political movements. Now all the world knows that 'reform' is a knife which not only cuts the canker from the tree to which it is applied, but also very often takes a goodly slice of the original wood, and sometimes lops off whole branches. Now in the case of the Reformation in England, (for we have nothing to do with the so-called Reformation abroad, which was, in fact, a severance of certain sects from the Body of CHRIST,) judging of it as we ought to judge of it, only by its legalised results, it will be found that the fabric of the Church, as it existed from the time of S. Austin, was left unmutilated; that the canker of abuse was cut out, but that the tree itself, thus cleansed, was to remain. And the proof of this is, that all the Acts of Parliament regulating the Church in its reformed state, refer back to the state of the Church long previous to the Reformation, as to rules which are to guide certain parts of its future discipline; such as to Canon law, and injunctions of the first year of Edward I., &c., &c. We often hear a great talk of what are called the tendencies of the Reformation. Any man of common reading knows, that the tendency of most religious movements among mankind is to drive men to the very opposite doctrines to those against which such movements are made; and therefore, if such tendencies are to be taken as the rule of the Church, we may at once safely espouse the religious views of Corporal Grace-be-with-me Humgudgeon, or of the fanatical trooper, who would preach so uncereemoniously in the little church of Woodstock. As the law stands, we are authorised in the positions

I have already advanced, that the Church now is the same Church that it was before the Reformation, without addition or innovation, but purged of its abuses."

"Far be it from me, Mr. Markham, to damp your hopes," said Major Dalton; "I wish, for the sake of us all, that there were others who could think on these subjects as clearly and as temperately as yourself. But from my small experience of the Clergy, as a body, there are a very great number of ministers of the Church, (not even party men, and therefore without party bias) who by their ministrations do not carry out anything like the principles you advocate."

"It is most true, Major Dalton," said Markham, with a sigh.

Markham's sigh was not without reason; the very locality in which they were conversing offered abundant ground for many sighs. Most truly too had he said, in the Newlands drawing-room, that the material difference between the High and the Low Church in England was defined by the words "sacramental" and "unsacramental." This is not only discernible in the preaching and writing of either party; it is as much, and even more so, in their ministration and its results.

It is not for us in recording this present history, to pretend to define what the Low Church does believe on these matters. I and you, reader, can only judge by the effects of their labours. Look round here in Morlington for instance, where Edgar and Major Dalton are conversing, and out of nine churches, say among eight of them, how often in the course of a year, the attention of the congregation is called to the due observance of the Sacraments? How often parents are informed that registration is not the holy institution of Baptism which *we are commanded to observe*; how

often congregations are reminded that "as often as they do eat of this Bread and drink of this Cup of the LORD, they do show the LORD's death till He come?" Of a truth, although the incumbents of these eight churches have all taken the oaths of ordination as priests of the Apostolic Church as established in England, it is impossible from their acts to say that they are sincere members of that Church. To aver what they really do believe, would be difficult, but to judge from their acts, can any one safely assert, that they acknowledge in their hearts that answer in the Church Catechism, which they are supposed to teach their parish children, that "the Body and Blood of CHRIST is *verily* and *indeed* TAKEN and received by the faithful in the LORD's Supper?"

These are the men that live in a constant excitement of fear at the advance of Popish supremacy in the land; men who observe not the doctrines of the Church whose clergy they are; men who have been ordained deacons and priests by the descendants of the Apostles, and talk of the Church of England as the Church of the Reformation! Sacramental and unsacramental! Priesthood and no priesthood! That is the material difference. No wonder we have dissent. To the neglect of the life-giving Sacrament of the Eucharist, without our going deeper into the philosophy of such matters, can plainly enough be ascribed the low standard of morals in this land, the free thinking, the so-called liberty of religious opinion, the scepticism, the vice of the age. We need go no further. Those that try to remedy this by the simple teaching of the observance in its integrity of what our LORD commanded, and our Church expressly teaches, are branded as Romanists, Jesuits, and other becoming *sobriquets*, equally unwarranted by the principles of common reasoning.

NOTE.—The Bishop of Exeter in a letter to the *Times*, in review of Dr. Lushington's Judgment, said that he gave up the credence table, "quâ credence" table, and had directed one of his clergy on an occasion where he was appealed to on this subject, to use the table, but not to call it a credence table.

A week or two afterwards, the Reverend James Skinner, of S. Barnabas, in a letter to the same paper, said that he was less inclined to defend the credence table, than any of the other things contended for, as it was immaterial to him whether "it was a table, a shelf, or a cupboard."

A very able and temperate writer, under the style of D. C. L., in the same periodical, put these two assertions together, and considered them to prove that the two writers gave up the question altogether, because the Bishop gave up the name, and Mr. Skinner gave up the table. But the meaning was clearly this,—that the Bishop suppressed the name, as he knew it was merely the Popish smack of the word which frightened the community, while Mr. Skinner gave up the table, for fear that the sight of it should suggest unfortunate associations with the Popish word, and he would be contented with a shelf (or a niche would have been better.) Neither surrendered the reason for which a shelf, table, or niche was required. It was to spare the weak consciences of those who will see Rome in the leg of a table, or in the flame of one simple pair of candles, that the concession was suggested.

Ap[ro]pos of this subject, I will take the following extract from the *Times* of May 16th, 1856, not many days before I write, being a portion of the Berlin correspondence of that journal, dated May 12. He is describing the consecration of a church, in the vicinity of Berlin, built for the auxiliary penal establishment in connection with that city, at which the king, his three brothers, the President of the Consistory and Ecclesiastical Council, &c. &c., attended. Remember, this is in Protestant Prussia.

After describing the service, he says,—“The altar stands in a niche, decorated gratuitously by artists of Berlin, with fresco pictures of the Evangelists. The silver candlesticks and crucifixes of marble which stand upon it, are presented by tradesmen of the town, the communion plate by an officer of the police force, and the covering of the altar by the widow of the late President.”

Fancy this to have taken place in one of our churches in London, or any of our large provincial towns, and figure to yourselves the uproar if you can.



CHAPTER XIV.

ALONE.

MAJOR DALTON had plenty of opportunities of judging for himself respecting the Church's broken unity in this same town of Morlington, of which he had the honour to command the garrison. Accustomed to the far off scenes of an Indian climate for so many years, with his mind formed on religious subjects by his private interpretation of that Holy Book, only aided by the chance acquaintance with some of the missionaries which might fall to his lot, he surveyed the state of things thrown before his eyes on his return to his native country with a sort of rugged grief. He had left it at an age when religious sympathy, diverted by early inspirations and newly raised expectations, is not always as warm as at a more advanced period of life. But these feelings came in due time. Hours of danger, sickness, absence from home, perhaps loss of friends, had turned that honest heart to the love of CHRIST; and the Major, as the hour approached for his return to England, looked forward to hours of enjoyment in communion with the Church's soldiers. In the intimacy contracted with those good and pious men who labour to spread her sway in distant lands, he formed the hopes of more lasting ties with all the best of those who he knew adorned, as it were, the head

quarters of the Church, and to draw from the fountain head those springs of consolation which in smaller streams he had partaken of abroad.

On a mind thus prepared, it may be imagined that the state of parties in the Church produced a somewhat curious result. Major Dalton was tolerably well read in history, or it should rather be said in historical *facts*, for he knew little of the practical results which movements, accident, design, &c., unite to produce. Hence he looked on the disunity in the Church as the effect of fanatical influence. On the one side he saw the Puritan, on the other the Romanist. He had no idea that circumstances might have been at work, or idleness; nothing but mistaken religious ardour was in his opinion the cause; and to this he ascribed all that ought in reality to be ascribed to bad times, bad men, and succeeding on them to apathetic hearts and ignorant minds. In the state of his opinions an ordinary man would probably have violently taken up one side or the other at once, but the Major was painstaking and temperate, and though bewildered did not transgress his usual habit of reflecting before he judged; and he could not be in a better place than Morlington for this purpose, as there was food enough to supply it.

It has before been mentioned that the town possessed congregations of every shade of dissent, (I should say Separatism, but dissent is the conventional term) but I did not say that even in the Churches differences were marked enough to be acknowledged in conversation by the inhabitants. For instance, there was the parish church of S. Michael, with its old urbane Vicar, who preached the stereotyped parish sermon of a century ago, was civil, prosy, and excellent in manner of life, but who did not work. There was the Incumbent of S. Swithin's, also an excellent old man, who

tried to persuade the local world that he was the only High Churchman in the town, though he neither in his church or in his parish, in the least degree, differed from the customs of his predecessors. There was S. Jude's, with its Curate somewhat Hibernian in his sermons, and the hot water he got into with his parishioners, and sometimes with his clerical brethren. There was S. Mark's, where the clergyman was reported to be a supra-lapsarian, and S. Giles', where he was a Calvinist. There was also the hard working, indefatigable Curate of All Saints', who never seemed to rest, and who prepared his orally delivered sermons, which attracted the most fashionable congregation in Morlington, with far more trouble than if he had written them.

All these were excellent men, all doubtless conscientious men, but all bore the reputation of preaching different shades of doctrine, and attracted persons of different shades of opinion, as each believed his or hers coincided with the doctrine taught.

Major Dalton then had ample means of judging for himself, and Markham encouraged him to seize every opportunity of doing so, in order that with the information he was now in possession of relative to the history of parties, he should impartially convince himself whether the teaching of the early Church could possibly be conveyed in all this disunion, and whether the efforts of true Churchmen to restore old doctrine and the forms of primitive worship, deserved the epithets cast upon them.

Moreover at this period Markham led his new friend in company with young Turnbull into the wretched alleys and squalid districts, which formed the parish of S. Bartholomew, the scene of his former labours—showed him the state of ignorance and apathy the wretched inhabitants were in—showed him how the Sacraments had been for-

gotten, and if remembered, derided because of the doctrines now *allowed* to be held in this our Church, and most of all showed him "the abundance of that harvest, for which the labourers were so few;" and then as he surveyed George Turnbull's face become grave at these sights, he repeated in a whisper the words of the interview in Callington Lane.

"Work, George, work," but not in such a whisper but that the Major overheard it.

Finally on the following Sunday he showed them troops of children brought in the afternoon service to holy Baptism, the results of the teaching of those for whom such hard words as "Romanist, Jesuit," &c., may in the mouths of some persons be heard; and Dalton said to George Turnbull as they walked home to barracks, "I'll tell you what, Turnbull, it smites home to my heart to think we are such idlers;" and George replied, "I wish, Major, that Markham was going to stay; I really think neither you nor I would be idle long in that case."

"Has he ever said anything to you about work before, that he spoke so emphatically this evening?"

"Yes; he said that I ought to do so on a former occasion; such an example would find plenty of followers in our profession: but he did not point out the exact way."

"Humph! it would not be such a difficult matter," said the Major, and then relapsed into silence.

* * * *

During Markham's stay at Morlington, his friends at Drellington—for they all loved him after their individual fashion, and more than ever since his loss, heard very little of him. Excepting that letter to Mrs. Wreford, and a few lines of thanks to the Vicar, Pansy was his only correspondent. To her he wrote from time to time respecting his schools,

and with her his thoughts seemed to run more freely, but there was the same air of weariness, even in his letters to her. All these documents were sent to Ethel, in answer to her inquiries about his state; why, I do not know, because they certainly gave no explanation on the question; but Ethel, perhaps, thought they did, and insisted that they should be sent to her, as if they were her property, and not Pansy's; and yet, after all, she could hardly have thought so, for she never showed them to her aunt, or hinted that she had them: which of course she would have done if they had thrown any light on the state of his mind and health.

And did Edgar never give one thought to Ethel all this time? Had he not one passing remembrance now and then for her, who had loved Eva well-nigh as well as he did? Oh, yes! often—often. Not that he could have defined how he thought of her,—in reality, he did not think of her—he rather knew her to be a part of his ideas. With Eva as she was in Morlington in former days, and as surrounding objects now so often brought her vividly to his mind, Ethel formed no part. But with Eva at Holycross, at Drellington, on the sofa in the library at Newlands, at the little organ, and oh! cruel memory, underneath that fresh-turned mound, Ethel was inseparable. It was not that Ethel was ever exactly in his thoughts, or ever exactly away from them. She lived with them and him.

Could Edgar, then, have found a heart to love so soon? you will say. Who knows that it was love? Perhaps it was not what we call love—perhaps it was that she was bound up inseparably with the departed, and Edgar would not love the one without the other. The fact was, that unconsciously to himself, Edgar carefully avoided examining into his feelings on this point. He was, as I have shown, a thoroughly sincere and devoted man. He had a

high, and solemn view of his responsibilities as a Priest, and he believed himself resolute in carrying out the self-denial they involved. Up to the present time, he had never been called upon to inquire into the question of marriage for the Clergy, as he had never met with any one to whom he cared to unite himself; but of late many vague and indefinite feelings had stirred within him, which brought the subject of marriage perpetually before him, and always accompanied by a painful doubt whether the duties of a Priest, such as he considered them, were compatible with the cares and pleasures of a married life.

Now, when such thoughts arose in Edgar's mind, he invariably thrust them aside, persuading himself that he did so because he fancied that as an obedient son of the Church, he was bound to consider the question of Clerical marriages a settled point, because they were permitted by her; but in reality he deeply deceived himself, as the most sincere men will, sometimes, under the influence of their prevailing temptation. In the secret of his heart, Edgar knew as well as any one, that although the English Church in her wisdom has not enforced on any that high self-sacrifice, which all men cannot receive, she has yet left her Priests perfectly free to adopt the purer life, and the truer fulfilment of their office involved in it if they will; and the practical law, which has of late determined the question for individuals has simply been, that those who had apprehended the requirements of the Priestly office in their truest and highest sense, voluntarily abstained from a state which they felt to be incompatible with it, whilst those who only understood half of what was expected of them, feared not to come to the work with a divided heart.

It will be seen in the continuation of his history, that Edgar never awoke from his self-deceit, till he had but too fatally carried it out into action; and

well was it for him that because of his real sincerity the punishment, if punishment it was, overtook him on this side of the grave. Meanwhile, the first tears he shed after Eva's death, were in homage to Ethel. It was on a cold November afternoon, the day of his return to Holycross, beside his sister's grave. There he saw the evidence of the tender love which Ethel bore to the departed girl. The ground around was carefully tended; flowers, such as became the time of year, bloomed there luxuriantly, and already place had been prepared to receive those which would stand the ruder season that was to come. He knew it all. Oh! good, brave Ethel! broke out that seared heart—for his lips spoke not—bless thee, bless thee! And the hot, scorching tears fell swift and warm, without a selfish hope or wish—true offering to so pure an affection as hers had been for Eva.

If Ethel had only known in the dull house in Warwickshire—dull indeed, to her—ah! well, if she had, it might only have put foolish thoughts into her head, which are just as well out of it.

The first person Edgar saw on his return was Pansy, whom he greeted with such unaffected pleasure, that the little girl broke out into a passion of crying, which caused him some trouble to soothe and set at rest. Then they sat down and talked of what she had done in his absence, and how she intended all through the winter to go on with the organ, if he'd let her, out of respect to the memory of—a choke—and a sob, &c., &c. And it was agreed that, as the weather might be inclement, every Sunday morning Edgar's stout pony Sugarplum, with the little basket gig, was to come up to Newlands for Pansy, and to bring her back in the evenings, and thus they got on tolerably comfortably.

And then, the truth must be told, Pansy began talking of Ethel, and Edgar listened too, and how

Ethel was shaken by the late terrible—a choke again, &c. But Pansy did not say that she was almost pestered to death by Ethel's minute inquiries on the subject of the young Curate, nor how puzzled she would be how to pacify that young lady's thirst for knowledge, now that she should have no more of his letters to send her.

The fact is, that poor unsophisticated Pansy had, quite in the recesses of her own heart—for she never divulged it to a soul—concocted a small melodrama, in which Edgar, Ethel, and the spire of Holycross church bore a distinguished part,—which of course was exceedingly silly in her, and should not be put down here at all. Most certainly she could not reflect on the wisdom of such ideas herself, when she remembered that of all the persons in Drellington with whom Edgar had avoided contracting an intimacy, Ethel had been the one, and that, too, when he had every opportunity of doing so. What would be the case now, when in all probability he would have hardly any?

But these conversations with Pansy, though they were often repeated, did not take Edgar out of Mopedom. He did not seem to court them, even; and perhaps after a time cared very little about them. Between services on Sunday, she always dined at the Parsonage, but Edgar never came near her on those occasions, and she had nobody but her own thoughts, her dinner, and the not very refreshing society of a certain Mrs. Stacey, a decrepit old septuagenarian whom he had engaged after Eva's loss, in place of the trim little handmaid Polly, who had formed her chief body-guard. How she longed for Ethel or Angelica! but it was not without some shade of doubt as to whether Colonel Wreford's ideas of propriety would permit either of them to accompany her.

It was not long, you may be sure, before the

Vicar began to scheme after Edgar's services for the Sunday evening's sermon again. His wife and Jane did both of them hint that he might wait a bit, and mumbled something about motives of delicacy, but the head of the Turnbull family knew nothing about any motives, as long as his comfort was concerned, and therefore soon hit upon an expedient for trouncing all such trumpery objections.

"Poor fellow!" he would say, "what he wants is excitement—occupation. He should never be allowed a moment to himself. It will be quite a charity to ask him to preach, and—hum!—I shall ask him to do so next Sunday. I am sure, my dear," he said, with a comical look in his right eye, "if George was here, he would never rest till he had got him to do it, and George knew him better than any of us; and Jane, there, too, would give her ears to hear him again."

Both these shots told. George had rejoined his regiment, now in Morlington, as has been already stated, and his name, used for any purpose, carried his mother in a trice, and Jane tried to laugh, but a palpable blush told the cunning old fellow that he was not far wrong, and so he determined to put his plan in action without delay.

As for Jane's feeling towards Edgar, she was perhaps at this time as far gone as she could be, without actually losing that self-control which she had prescribed to herself at one time in their acquaintance. Nothing but the thorough conviction of Ethel's being the future possessor of his love in spite of all the efforts she could put forth prevented her yielding up all her preconceived opinions and prejudices on religion to please him; she had in reality for some time been more than half convinced, and now, when she saw the man, who of all others had fascinated her most, suffering, yet apparently patient, bowed down to the dust, yet

never even by a sigh uttering a complaint, her former resolution began to totter. To her, moreover, he was as open and kind as ever, carefully listening to her opinion, and if correcting it, doing so with deference and mildness, even though that opinion were one which she knew he detested and despised. It was not wise to throw up a game with such a chance of winning. Ah! Jane, if you had known human nature, you would have remembered that this is the sort of crisis in a man's existence, when his heart may be touched just when it is most open to an influence, to which in its more healthy moments it would be perfectly callous. Ethel was away; you had no reason to believe that as yet there was anything between them on either side; indeed you had the best grounds for believing that the contrary was the case, and why not interest him by giving up those opinions which you yourself did not conscientiously hold, as if converted by the arguments which he adduced so winningly and so well? Delighted with his success, desolate in his sorrow, interested in your future, who knows what might not have been? Indeed it was a fine playing hand you held.

Edgar was in the drawing room at the Vicarage with Mrs. Turnbull, Jane, and Fanny. He had called in answer to a note he had received from the Vicar, to say that he owed the deepest debt of gratitude to every one in Drellington, and that wherever or whenever he could be of assistance to him, so long as it did not interfere with his own duties, he trusted that they would make use of his services. Jane's heart bled as she looked on him while he was speaking. He did not look ill exactly; there was that clear delicate tint on his cheek, which he had always carried, somewhat more evident, but it was not an unhealthy tint; and his

eye was clear, but it was the hopeless air of fatigue, mingled now and then with a certain acerbity, which pervaded every word and action, that distressed her for him most. She immediately set about laying herself out to please him, and since, as a matter of principle, he always lent himself to what she said, it was not difficult to get half way at all events.

"You have been to Morlington, Mr. Markham," she said.

"Yes, I have been there ever since I left this neighbourhood," was the reply.

"You must have found that a very disagreeable place for you," she continued.

A slight shade passed over his countenance, but she evidently did not mean to displease him, so he merely answered, "Why?"

"Oh! I mean, that to a person of your religious opinions Morlington must afford grounds of offence at every turn," said Jane, indignant with herself for the mistake into which her ambiguity of language had really led her.

"A clergyman ought never to find ground for offence, though he may for regret and for reproof. Besides my residence there, as a curate, must well have accustomed me to its faults."

"Still you must find those grounds of regret very tiresome."

"Undoubtedly; but on this occasion I went there to distract my mind, so that perhaps they were not so distasteful to me as formerly. But why do you ask?"

"Why, you know it is some time since we have had a talk on these matters. You have shown me over and over again what you think wrong in Drelington, but you never spoke to me about places which equally displease you in their various methods of religious—what shall I call it?—in their way of worshipping God for instance."

"I see what you mean.—You desire to know the religious peculiarities of Morlington, as far as I disapprove of them; a very pretty task you set me, in a place where every shade of religious opinion exists, that even modern scepticism could invent.

"But tell me one or two, Mr. Markham, if it does not tease mamma."

"I should like to hear it of all things. I have often wanted to hear how Mr. Markham manages to bring you to reason."

"Oh! well, if you desire it," said Edgar, beginning to be amused, "I will mention anything that occurs to me. But remember, far the largest number of Morlington people are dissenters by profession; against them I have nothing to say, they act according to their ideas, and exert themselves most meritoriously to do good after their method; it is only the Churchmen by profession, but dissenters in heart, that excite my regret or disapproval. For instance, one of their favourite days for marrying and giving in marriage is Good Friday, the day when the true Christian should put ashes on his heart for Him whom his sins crucified,—the day that should be given to the greatest mourning in the year they choose for that occasion which in man's life we consider one of the greatest festivity."

"Well, that does seem a strange practice," said Jane; "what can be the reason of it?"

"You see the wickedness of it in the present case, because it bears that wickedness on the face of it; and yet the very principle that governs it leads to many other errors where the absurdity is not so palpable. I will still confine myself to Morlington, though the lesson may be applied nearer home."

"I am all attention," said Jane.

"Well, then, the principle is this.—Morlington

is a working town; everything in the eyes of the population divides itself into work and rest; mind, by population I mean high as well as low. A day is either a day of work or a day of rest—Sunday, for instance; but on extraordinary occasions the day of rest becomes what is commonly called a holiday. Good Friday is not a day of work,—it is not a Sunday, therefore it is a holiday. They know there is no distinction in the particular holiday. Good Friday is as much a holiday as Easter Monday:—they never for one moment think of its awful meaning.”

“I can easily understand that in the case of poor artisans, who work from morning till night all their lives except Sunday,” said Mrs. Turnbull; “it is natural.”

“Of course it is, because the Church has not taught them better. Follow the principle out a little further, and you will see how it is that we have so many Dissenters. Sunday is a day of rest: it is kept holy as the one day of seven set apart for rest, with the condition (among those who go to church) of worship and praise. But to people who hold this belief, no one Sunday differs in their view from another. If people don’t understand the sacred nature of Good Friday, it is not a matter of surprise that they see no distinction between Advent Sunday and the First Sunday after Trinity. They keep Sunday merely in reference to a human institution, not in reference to CHRIST at all. The seasons of the Church are of course a dead letter to them, and the doctrines of the Prayer Book unintelligible.”

“Yes, but the accusation against you Tractarians,” said Mrs. Turnbull, “is, that you attach too much importance to seasons.”

“Of course, it is among those who understand not the theory of the seasons,” said Edgar; “but

tell me first, Mrs. Turnbull, if people keep not the seasons themselves, how do you expect they will keep the doctrines they commemorate? And if I show to you that the doctrines the Church teaches her children in the Prayer Book are precisely the same, and in the same order and after the same method, that our blessed SAVIOUR taught His disciples, step by step, lesson by lesson, will you not allow the necessity as well as the benefit of the seasons? I know we are accused of observing seasons which are empty names, and of using empty forms. But the Low Churchmen never can be induced to remember that in the ordinance on which the two parties are directly at issue, namely the Holy Eucharist, it is they who make bread and wine a form, a sign only, a mere badge or profession of our faith, not we."

"Still poor people cannot be supposed to know this," persisted the old lady.

"And therefore not understanding, not knowing even the seasons of their Church," continued he, as if finishing her sentence for her, "they naturally go to a form of worship the principles of which they can understand, and so become dissenters. Truly they cannot be supposed to know. Was it not to teach these people, 'to open the eyes of the blind, and to give light to those that sit in darkness,' that our blessed LORD appointed ministers and stewards of His mysteries? Believe me," he said, turning to Jane, "what I have told you before can never be told you too often. Believe me, there is not a season, not a Collect in a season, not a Saint's Day appointed, that does not convey a lesson; not by itself only, but a lesson bearing reference to a whole chain of teaching, and that chain modelled on the plan itself our blessed LORD adopted to His disciples, at least so they and their successors tell us. Even the holly and berries with which we

deck our churches at Christmas, have a lesson. But what hope have we in such a place as Morlington, where Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday are days of bargain, and sale, and labour, like other days ; and, except in two churches out of ten, Lent is disregarded, or if noticed, noticed only as the remains of Popish superstition. Hope, I say, there is always, hope and trust in God : but in man, where the Church's own priests *won't* know their duty, where is their hope ?”

He spoke with some bitterness, and there was a pause ; when Jane, not wishing to leave the subject, and desirous of diverting his thoughts, said, “ May I ask, as you are speaking of Romish superstition, whether the question of altar-cloths does not involve a return to Romish practices ?”

Markham could not help smiling, but recovering himself he said, “ For an answer to that question, Miss Turnbull, I must refer you to what I said some months back at Newlands, during a conversation in which you took part. Because certain practices existed in the English Church at the time, when in common with the Church of Rome it acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope, it does not follow that they were Popish practices, even if they were similar to certain other practices which we know were prevalent in the Romish Church. Altar-cloths in all their variety, such as they existed previous to the Reformation, were not only peculiar (that is, used without reference to any rule of the Romish Church,) to the English Church, but peculiar in their colours and designs to particular dioceses and parishes in England. And they continued so, and were permitted by law after the Reformation, and under the sanction of the new order of things. The Romish Church, therefore, were they to use any one of these particular colours or patterns, might be accused of resorting to English

practices with much more reason than when, in restoring them, we are accused of returning to Romish superstition. But these things will be known some day, if we do not all become first as the Church of Laodicea, 'neither hot nor cold,' to whom all religion is a matter of indifference."

At this juncture the Vicar, attended by the faithful Doolittle, made his appearance, and both greeted him after their peculiar fashion. The Vicar said he never saw him look better in his life, which was untrue; and Doolittle hum'd and ha'd! and not to be too far behind the parson, just compounded by giving vent to a prevarication only.

Edgar preached the next Sunday night at Drelington; but by this time he had made his footing in the place good, and he was no man to tarry at his work. The gentle, persuasive manner of the previous few months, was exchanged now for the reiterated earnestness of solemn warning; and whether owing to the morbid state of his own mind, or to a fixed plan, is not quite clear, but the Reverend Mr. Markham contrived for three Sundays running to frighten the congregation of Drelington most royally to such an extent, that Pander swore his sermons gave him a nervous attack, though he had had it all last week; and Mrs. Pander thought so much brandy-and-water did not make it better, whereupon Pander called his wife opprobrious names for giving an opinion.

Henrietta Gascoigne was also much affected by the change in the Curate's mode of teaching. "Bless the man, if blowing us up in that way is Puseyism," said she, "I have done with the lot. Jane, my dear, why don't you marry him at once? he'll never be bearable till you do; and if you were not very stupid, you might have him fast and tight before the Wrefords come back."

But Jane, though she felt it more and more

keenly, as his abilities and fascinating manners gradually got more and more sway over her, only shook her head and replied with a laugh, "He is not meant for me, Harry, so there is no use talking about it."

But this is Monday, and on Thursday next the Wrefords return.



CHAPTER XV.

HOME AGAIN.

To Colonel Wreford, occupied by his London avocations, and by the gravity of his senatorial duties, the events of the spring and summer had appeared matters of no great consequence. He had from time to time been kept *au courant* by his wife of the facts of the new Curate's arrival at Holycross, of her acquaintance with him, of the popularity of him and his sister, of the friendship of the latter with Ethel, and of her illness and impending death. But Colonel Wreford was a man of the world, and he saw nothing more remarkable in all these circumstances than what accompanies the ordinary routine of human events. Except to think that Ethel ought to have her romance worked out of her, or to blame Georgiana for encouraging an intimacy which seemed likely to disarrange his plans, they never troubled the even course of his reflections. Respecting Miss Conway's future disposal, the Colonel had certainly for some time been puzzled how to take his measures. He knew better than any, that she was exceedingly lovely, that a girl like her with a large fortune as times go, was not sent into this world to die an old maid at Drellington, and that he was the person who ought to see that she did not.

But to these considerations were joined two others.

Ethel was of a peculiarly imaginative disposition, rapidly taking impressions, and as tenaciously holding them; and he had somehow thought himself bound, to let her up to this time follow the bent of her own inclinations, and not press any too rapid change of life upon her, from respect to the request of her father, Edward Conway, on his death-bed. The result was, that Ethel had been more her own mistress from fifteen to one-and-twenty, than any young lady within the circle of his very considerable acquaintance; and now as the Colonel felt, that it was really high time for him to present this rare piece of excellence to the world as his niece, and if possible, through her marriage, increase and advance his own position in life—he was as much dismayed by the difficulties which lay before him, as so gallant a member of so gallant a profession has it in his nature to be. To do him justice, at that stage of his plans he never for a moment thought of constraining her, and indeed it was not necessary, for Ethel properly managed, was as docile a young girl as ever lived, but she had an almost invincible dislike to London, and the Colonel ruefully thought on his folly in permitting her to receive her first impressions of that Paradise on earth, through the instrumentality of such an empty headed chatter-box as Lady Nelthorpe. However, there it was, and the mischief must be eradicated, as well as it could be. So after due reflection, the Colonel hit upon the scheme of commencing with something short of London. “If,” he wrote to his wife, “Ethel can be induced to join you, when you meet me at Scarborough about the end of September, I think the first step will be gained. She will take her first impressions of fashionable life under a bright sky, in a most charming locality, and under our own, not Lady Nelthorpe’s direction, and then leave the

rest to me." Now what was that rest? It was not arranged in detail, nor even mentioned to Ethel till some time afterwards; but as we are on this subject, we may just as well state what it was, now.

Colonel Wreford intended to "make much" of Ethel at Scarborough, that is, to show her the greatest affection, to affect the greatest interest in her, and to be proud of her; to show her in short, that he considered admiration of her as respect shown to him, and to get her to enter society, because she saw it pleased him, until her distaste for it wore off. Having made her feel that she was an integral part of his existence, it was to be discovered that the house at Newlands was in such an alarming state of dilapidation, that unless it was half rebuilt in the months of May, June, July, and August, the most disastrous consequences must ensue. The whole family must emigrate to Belgravia during that season, and "would his own Ethel, his pride, to whom he had got so used of late, that he could not do without her, refuse to come with her old uncle?" The distaste of London would have worn off in the finishing shop of Scarborough, and the whole plan concluded with a vista of white favours, carriages, a coronet, S. George's, Hanover Square, and a Bishop's lawn sleeves. Truly the plan was not a bad one, if the young lady could be induced to fall in with that part of it, which concerned Scarborough; and at this juncture Mrs. Wreford found an able auxiliary in Eva, whose acquaintance they had not long made, and for whose subsequent fate they were not then prepared. Eva used all her influence to induce Ethel to promise compliance to what she thought would be for her pleasure and benefit, and Eva had to do no more than ask. The Colonel was in an ecstasy, and indeed fortune seemed to be very kind

to him. Eva died in the very nick of time; there was no reason for Ethel to forego the excursion on the ground of the illness of her newly found sister. The first step in the scheme had succeeded. Ethel was in Scarborough.

But after this, Fortune as pertinaciously took it into her head to look in another direction. Nothing would induce Ethel to go into society for even an evening. As Pansy said, she was much shaken by Eva's death. The Colonel had never seen her so much affected since her father died. She was always attentive, dutiful, and affectionate to him, but any attempt to take her out except in his ordinary walks and drives, produced such a passion of grief, that he gave it up the first week. It must not be supposed, that to those whom she met in these rides or drives, she seemed as if she were mourning. There were no traces of tears or quivering of the lip or other signs of strong emotion. She was rather *distracte*, and wrapt up in her own thoughts, and there was a gentle mournfulness of manner about her, which became her very well. The men thought she "had had a disappointment"—the women that it was "all put on." But the result was the same. The Colonel could not get her to do what he wanted, and he very often had to search for her on the beach looking at the waves, or at a distant sail, or at nothing at all. In vain he tried everything that persuasion, affection, and artifice would effect. Ethel had got one impression in her heart, and as was always the case with her, it excluded all others for the time.

"Eva—what is Eva doing? Is her spirit near, or with her brother, or perhaps everywhere. Dear good Eva, when shall I ever be like her?"

So the Colonel prudently gave up this part of his scheme, but with his eye steadily on the future, proceeded to draw closer the ties of affection be-

tween himself and her. He was always with her, comforting, talking, listening. She must talk to him about Eva, tell him what she was like, what she said, "Did she love Ethel?" What a pretty brooch that was which Mr. Markham had sent as a souvenir of her. Doves too—so appropriate. Doves were the emblems of purity. About Mr. Markham too, he should make a point of knowing, and liking him, and helping him if he could. Holycross was but a poor place for an able man. Lord Tramontane had higher interest than he had, but his interest was good too. This idea however, did not find so much favour with Ethel. "He would never leave the place where Eva lay sleeping, if he could help it," she said.

"What a milksop the man must be," thought the Colonel.

But Scarborough was over, and Warwickshire was over, and the party was home again at Newlands. The Colonel who saw now more than ever, that the success of his plans depended upon his humouring and indulging his niece, for his untiring kindness and pretended sympathy hitherto had already excited the liveliest gratitude in the gentle girl's heart, counselled his wife on no account to constrain Ethel if she desired to visit her friend's grave; but that estimable matron, though she had not thought it necessary to impart her own forebodings respecting an approaching attachment between Edgar and Ethel to her husband, was too prudent to let matters take their course in that headlong fashion. "A pretty piece of management," she said to herself, "to let the two meet over the grave and mingle their tears, with that little scape-grace Pansy, hiding her face in her hands all the time, in order to see nothing." No! No! Ethel should go to the grave, but she would go with her, and simple Ethel, who had

no after-thought on the subject, thought it a great proof of her aunt's nobleness of character that she did so.

Mrs. Wreford chose a favourable hour. Everything went off satisfactorily. Markham was out, so they took the liberty of walking into the parsonage, and looking round the well-known rooms, to the wonder and admiration of old Mrs. Stacey, who was constitutionally of an humble mind. Ethel was strangely affected, and even her aunt spoke little. They looked at everything, took up everything, noticed with a singular interest the smallest evidence of the mourner's occupations, and finally, Ethel slipped into her muff a small volume of sacred poems, which she knew Eva had prized, leaving in its stead a little bunch of dried "forget-me-nots," which she had gathered weeks back, intending to preserve them for Eva's grave.

It was some months later, before she knew how faithfully and lovingly these dead flowers had been cherished by him, who found them there.

Ethel was somewhat surprised, that Edgar had not been to greet her aunt on their return home; but Pansy informed her, that he had been unwell during the week, and that, when she saw him at the Wednesday's service, he had seemed more *abattu* than she had remarked him to be since his return from Morlington. "But he preaches on Sunday evenings here, as formerly," she said, "we shall all see him then, I suppose?"

Meantime, Colonel Wreford had received the salutations of the whole neighbourhood, on his reappearance in it after so long an absence. During the receipt of these, Edgar Markham would, under ordinary circumstances, have been the last person in his thoughts. He had supposed him to be a clever, diligent Clergyman, of a strong Tractarian tendency, not very wise in worldly matters, and altogether more an object of pity than of admiration.

But the Friday and Saturday succeeding the day of his return, convinced him, that either the Curate of Holycross was a very remarkable person, or that all Drellington was stark, staring mad. He was not a person, from the nature of his hours, formed as they were on the London pattern, who frequented Divine Service of an evening in ordinary cases, but his curiosity was roused; "and to-morrow night," he said to his wife, "I shall treat myself to a sight of this paragon of a parson."

Mrs. Wreford smiled, and shook her head, as if deprecating his treating the matter in that way. Ethel, who was writing a note at a side table, merely raised her head and looked at him for a moment with that mournful, quiet gaze of hers; and Pansy's cheek flushed, for she was one of Edgar's most devoted champions.

It was Advent Sunday, on which the treat in question came off. Edgar had adhered to his plan of remaining in his surplice by the altar during the prayers, which he had followed on the first occasion of his officiating, and there were one or two other points of change, probably out of compliment to him, which the Colonel's keen eye detected at once. The most remarkable, however, was a general tendency among the congregation to join in the services, which they never used to do, and an increased pomposity on the part of the Vicar in his reading, which struck him as exquisitely ludicrous.

"This fellow has made himself felt, however," he thought. Ethel, too, was deeply interested, and a pang shot through that gentle bosom, as she looked again on his countenance—the first time she had seen him, since he held the lifeless Eva in his arms. He looked so fagged, she thought.

But his manner amply compensated for the weariness of his looks. Choosing one of the many lessons of warning, which that sacred day teaches, he made one of the most admirable appeals to the

feelings of his hearers that Wreford had ever heard. His manner, lighted by a fire, which Ethel knew in an instant was unnatural, carried every word with it—words, which the choicest diction made in itself the most effective.

“What would some friends of mine give in London,” thought the Colonel, “if they knew where this light was hidden. Good-looking, too! Pshaw! I would get him a church to-morrow!”

“Well, Colonel, what is your opinion?” said Ned Gascoigne, who had become, of late, a frequenter of the Evening Service, (merely to hear the man, reader,—he cared not one straw for prayer, or for the lessons of the Church.)

“My opinion!” said Wreford, “Why, I had not the smallest idea, that Drellington could take a scolding so well.”

Ethel did not see Markham that evening, as she had expected. The nights being dark, no opportunity was offered for meeting in the churchyard, and chatting in groups, or on their way home, as during the summer; and the Colonel did not know then, that Edgar had always been welcome to the evening meal at Newlands after church, and before he returned to Holycross, and Mrs. Wreford did not choose to tell him.

One day during the ensuing week, when Ethel and Pansy returned from a series of stupid visits to the Gascoignes, Mrs. Kirk, Mrs. Pander, and others, she heard that Markham had called, and sat with her uncle and aunt more than an hour; and it was some satisfaction to know, that the former was delighted with him. “He was a man,” said the Colonel, “who would be an acquisition in any society.” Still, she had not seen him. The Colonel said he would ask him to dinner, but he did not think he would come: he went no where—refused every invitation, the Vicar said.

It was only as Eva's brother, that Ethel would like to see him; there could be no harm, she thought, in seeing him; but how if he would not come and see her? Why did he not? She was somehow a part of Eva. Eva had called her "sister," in her dying moments. So strange of him not to come! And yet Ethel was not in love, or what is commonly called "in love." She certainly loved him as Eva's brother, but the idea of his ever being more to her, had not for an instant crossed her imagination. She thought nothing more natural, than that they should meet very often, and talk of her, who had been the same to both, particularly as they had never met since that last moment.

But he came not. Her uncle did not ask him to dinner, because he said it was of no use: but he did ask him to a dance, which he gave in honour of the Drellington young folk,—as if that could have been of any use either. Of course he did not come to that. The Colonel called on him, and met him continually at one place and another, and always came home delighted with his society; but he did not come to see Ethel, and the next day was to be the last Sunday in Advent, and Christmas was at hand.

Some may be inclined to blame Markham for his conduct in this respect, but a very little reflection will show them, that he acted like an upright and an honourable man. It was quite true that Ethel had been more than an acquaintance to him, however distant his personal communication had been with her. For no intimacy is so strong as that which is made by a common affliction; and he would not only have been justified in following up that intimacy, but under ordinary circumstances he would have been bound in mere gratitude not to have broken it off too rudely. In the present instance, however, the particular nature of the case rendered

it impossible for him to follow the dictates of any known rule.

Ethel Conway was a young girl of a peculiar temperament; singularly imaginative, with strong affections, and tenacious of the object which riveted them. She was simple in her way of thinking to a degree; saw no results other than the pure bent of her own inclinations; knew no wrong herself, and thought none of others. Such a girl, with her mind excited at Eva's loss, looking upon her brother as the personification of Eva's excellence in the other sex, sympathising with his loss, and desirous of resorting to him on all occasions of religious doubt, would have transferred her affections from the dead to the living, without giving him time to prevent, by early prudence, the mischief, and probably without perceiving the change herself.

Edgar knew all this. Moreover, he knew his own danger. To him who had watched this child of nature through all her doubts and difficulties on religious truth,—who had seen her devotion to his beloved Eva, her readiness to be moulded by her and him to anything that was good,—she would almost be the most dear—would that he could always feel her to be no more!—the most dear sister. But if more?—how could he justify it to his conscience, if he took those affections, which he felt might be his for the asking, and in return for all the goodness, which her aunt and her cousin had lavished upon him and his, disappointed every cherished wish and expectation they had in store for her? No, it was better as it was. He had called at the house; he had seen the master and mistress of it—that she was away was mere accident. The Colonel he met continually. More could not be expected of him; and though he would, now that all was long passed, like to have

poured out his gratitude at Ethel's feet, it was better for both that it should not be.

Blame him not, reader! He did not run into temptation, if afterwards he yielded when it pursued him. That he yielded at last, shows that the best of us are powerless before a great temptation, if we do not cut it from us, even though the sacrifice cost us a hand or an eye.

When Ethel came down to breakfast on the morning of this last Sunday in Advent, she found the Colonel down before her, engaged in the hopeless process of teasing Pansy, who was already bonneted and shawled for Holycross, before the rest of the family had even assembled. Pansy, taking advantage of the good humour of the gallant legislator, had been trying to get him to attend Markham's church that morning, if it was only to hear her play the organ for her little choir. But the Colonel had an insuperable objection to working his horses on a Sunday—his horses, mind, nothing else; for though a good husband, a good father, and a charitable man, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, the Colonel's religion smacked somewhat of the expediency of this liberal age, and therefore all Pansy's seductions were in vain. But she was very charming on this particular morning. There had been a hard frost on the previous night, and the sun was shining brightly on the hoar frost, which covered trees, grass, shrubs outside; and there was a glorious crackling fire inside. And most cheering of all, Pansy's downy cheeks and clear eyes looked so bright, that it was hard to refuse her anything. Still, Sunday and the horses—

"Oh, but Uncle Wreford,"—though no relation, she had acquired a prescriptive right through Ethel to address him so,—“Christmas-day is next Thursday; come then. We are going to decorate

the church so beautifully. We shall have a large red cross, composed entirely of Christmas berries, on the altar—berries only, remember."

"That will be an attraction," said the Colonel. "Have another entirely of heart's-ease in the pulpit, and it's a bargain."

"Then you promise to come?" said Pansy, blinking the condition.

"Well, upon my word," said he, patting her cheek, "I don't think I can say no. What do you say, Georgiana?" to Mrs. Wreford, who entered at that moment; "Shall we go to Holycross Church on Thursday, and hear this young lady murder the Christmas hymn?"

"I really think you ought," said his wife; "I have promised her so often to go over, and she is always there alone, so that I think it will look as well."

"Well, there, I promise," he said, laughingly; "and here comes your conveyance," as Markham's pony-gig, driven by a clean lad in a black livery, drove slowly up.

Pansy went off in triumph, and the whole party watched her drive away; the pony, who was an admirable stepper, trotting along with his ears pricked up, as if conscious of the precious nature of his charge, while Pansy was wondering, whether this new arrangement about Thursday would make any difference in a scheme Ethel had matured the preceding night, and imparted to her this morning.

"And what are you looking so grave about, Ethel?" said the Colonel, embracing his niece.

"I was considering just then, whether there ever was such a pretty girl as Pansy," said she.

"By Jove, you are right!" returned he; "and I was thinking, whether Markham could do better, than console himself by making that same pretty girl his wife. He could do worse."

"That's just what I have often thought too," said his wife, quite charmed at the coincidence in their mental lucubrations. "What a good thing it would be for her!"

"Yes," said the Colonel, trying to dispose of an additional muffin, "nothing would please me more. Her birth is against her in comparison with his, but that is of no consequence in a parson's wife; and he on his side would gain a charming, amiable companion, admirably educated, and, excepting in that one respect, just suited to the profession in life he has chosen to adopt."

And the Colonel really believed what he said. Grandees like himself often talk in this way. In the case of his son, if he had had one old enough, a marriage with Pansy would have been a *mésalliance*; but then the Colonel had been educated at Eton, was in the Guards, and an M.P.; and his elder brother had thought proper, some twenty years before, to permit his horse to lie a-top of him in a ditch for a couple of hours, when out hunting, which had resulted in Newlands falling into the hands of its present possessor: while Markham, on the other hand, though of better family, had been only educated at Harrow and Cambridge, and was a country curate.

Such reflections as these passed through his daughter Angelica's mind, as she observed, in her off-hand, nursery manner, "Oh, papa, Mr. Markham would not have her."

"Pray, little Missy, what do you know about such matters?" said her father, elevating his eyebrows.

"A great deal, papa," replied Missy, obstinately. "I have watched Mr. Markham, and I am sure he is very proud—as proud as you are, papa."

"Indeed! I had no notion that I had such an observer of character in my family," said the

Colonel, with mock solemnity ; “ but, for all that, my little daughter, I have known more unlikely events take place.”

Ethel could hold her peace no longer : so, by way of entering her protest against such a summary disposal of Edgar’s prospects, she said rather gravely, “ And yet, I think, such a marriage would be a very unhappy one.”

“ And why ?” asked the Colonel, who thought that Ethel never hazarded a thought on marriage in general.

“ Because,” she returned, “ though there may be no disparity in the station of life, to speak of,—and you, who know that best, say there is none,—there is the greatest disparity in everything else. He is quick, anxious, restive, finding employment in trifles, and particular in the detail of the smallest trifles ; thinking that life is more dependent for happiness on the careful disposal of them, than on the success of some great aim ; loving learning, and revelling in the interchange of it, when he sees it in others ; versed in everything which belongs to elegant education, and loving them all too with his heart and soul ; enthusiastic in his mode of adoring his Maker—” She stopped, for she felt that she was elaborating his character too much ; then continuing, “ He would want a wife to respond to all this, and Pansy could do so in none of them.”

“ True, Ethel,” said her uncle, who quite forgot, in his admiration of the speaker, the peculiar fact of her thinking so much on the subject ; “ but life is made up of contrarieties. This is the very man to marry a girl who, you say, has none of these things : it is always so. And for that reason I think it would not be a bad thing for him : he could do worse. He gets an amiable young wife, much more accomplished than the ordinary run of women whom, in his station, he can hope to be in-

timate with ; and she, though her birth might be in her way in any other station, would be an ornament to that particular one in which he happens to move."

In his station! The Colonel evidently thought he lived in the times of which Fielding wrote, and was picturing to himself Edgar as Parson Adams, drinking a glass of small beer in Lady Booby's kitchen.

Ethel said no more, but she thought to herself that either she must be a very silly girl, or that her uncle and aunt were labouring under an attack of temporary mental aberration.

And now about the little scheme Ethel had matured. Ethel had resolved, as Edgar would not come and see her, to go and see Edgar. Be not alarmed: her motives were as pure as the saint's, whose name she bore. Anxious as she was to speak to him of his dead sister on her own account, she was more so in the same respect on his own. She knew him to be suffering, and fully realising his peculiar temperament, she knew, that his suffering must be most severe. She fancied too, that this suffering was aggravated by his not seeing her. Her own kind heart had told her, that nothing soothes the anguish of a suffering heart so much as the interchange of thoughts with another who has suffered from the same cause. He might have good reasons for wishing to avoid her sympathy; but he was injuring himself by doing so. He suffered more by such a course. One interview might relieve him a little. She had been at home more than a month: more than three had elapsed since Eva's death. He would not come to her; she would go to him.

On the previous night then, she had told Pansy, that she should walk down on this Sunday afternoon, and meet her and walk back with her from Holycross.

Pansy thought the idea not a very prudent one, for many reasons. But Ethel had made up her mind, though Pansy, when she left home in the morning, half hoped that the Colonel's scheme for Christmas Day would be enough for her. At three o'clock that afternoon Ethel touched her on the shoulder in Holycross churchyard, and the two entered the church together and sat inside the organ screen during the service.

It is probable that Ethel had not any very clear idea, of what she expected to gain by thus seeking this meeting with Edgar. It was possibly a hope, that while speaking of Ethel, some light might be thrown on the reasons for his keeping himself away from Newlands. Nothing might come of it at all; but she never thought of that. Her mind indeed was perhaps under a compound of influences. A little pique perhaps for her own sake that he had not come to see her: much sympathy for his own sorrow: great yearning to speak of her dear departed Eva, whose memory was so cherished by both. Perhaps you will say too she was in love. It might be so; but she most unquestionably was not aware of this herself, or she would have avoided Holycross altogether. Whatever her motives, they were like herself, pure, impulsive, and singleminded.

And the meeting, was it without result?

Not quite so, though some ardent minds might be of that opinion. At the close of the service Edgar, who from some cause was evidently suffering, in a few well chosen words expressed his regret at not having met with an opportunity of thanking her for all her kindness, both in his own behalf and that of one who had left them. This jarred somewhat on Ethel's ears, for she had thought herself into the conviction that she had as much property in Eva, or nearly as much, as her brother himself, and

to be thanked for cherishing her own seemed sadly out of place. In reply, however, she hastily dismissed this, and remarked on his own health, in which she was joined by Pansy, and the two girls implored him each in their own artless fashion to join in the society of those who esteemed him, and who cherished the memory of Eva as much as he. Edgar looked pleased, and promised he would not belie the interest, which others so kindly took in him; but at the same time it was from choice, he said, that he secluded himself, and with a nature like his he felt convinced it was for a time the best course.

And so ended the interview, Pansy much relieved, that it had gone off so tearlessly. Ethel, delighted to think, that she had seen him at last, and Edgar, without the slightest idea that the meeting had been anything else than the result of mere accident. And he returned to brood once more over his regrets and mental struggles; and as he gazed on the withered bunch of forget-me-nots, to think how much they resembled his own hopes, *withered*, though ever *present*, always to be cherished with mixed pleasure and pain, and yet never to show symptoms of returning life.

Still, seeing and speaking with her had brought some comfort. She thought of him at all events. And in the dark December light, he felt as if surrounding objects were brighter, than they had been before. For the first time for three long months his load seemed easier to bear. Oh heavenly sympathy of youthful purity! three long months! not much to us—but to the mourner—and those three months seemed hardly so long to him now.

Quick, Edgar Markham, gird up thy loins, Mopedom allows no false citizens within her bounds, and even now she mistrusts thee.

Ethel and Pansy walked on briskly through the

frosty air for some time in silence. The bright sunshine had gone, and given place to a dull half mist, which was beginning to obscure the surface of the fields at a very little distance from the walkers. Pansy was fatigued with her day's work, and therefore was not inclined to be communicative. Ethel felt the excitement of the late scene showing itself in its reaction on her spirits, and became dull and depressed; and so they walked on in silence for nearly a mile.

Pansy was the first to break silence.

"Was it very prudent of you to make that visit, Ethel?"

"How prudent?" asked Ethel. "You think that Uncle Wreford would disapprove of it."

"I should not ask him if I was you," said Pansy. "Nor did I refer to him. -I meant prudent for your own self. Forgive me, Ethel, but I do think it would be a terrible thing for you to be in love."

Ethel turned round in astonishment.

"What should make you think of that now?" said she; "and why should it be terrible?"

"I mention it now, because I think you are taking more interest in Mr. Markham than you are aware of; and I think it would be terrible, because, if it turned out ill, you would break your heart."

"Dear little Pansy, don't be frightened, there is no fear of my being in love with Mr. Markham.—Mind I do not say I do not like him; for I love him,—love him dearly, as Eva's brother,—but no more."

"No more?" said Pansy, inquiringly. "Oh! Ethel, beware—"

"You silly child," said Ethel, taking her arm fondly; "nothing of the kind ever entered my head, till you mentioned it. See! if Mr. Markham was to pop up now from the other side of that first stile,

and was to ask me to marry him I am sure I should say, no."

"Because you never expected he would ask you," said Pansy. "I believe you so far. But now suppose him to be satisfied with his answer for the present, but to pop up again from the other side of the next stile beyond, do you think you would give him the same answer?"

"Yes," said Ethel, but hesitatingly. "Oh! I see what you mean. You think if he pressed me, that although I refused him once, I should not have the heart to refuse him a second time. Perhaps you are right. I would not certainly give him pain for worlds; and for Eva's sake, and to save him pain, I might say yes!"

"Oh! you think it possible," said Pansy, "just as you came down to-day to Holycross, merely for her sake."

"Just so;" and Ethel seemed so satisfied of the impartiality of her feelings that Pansy did not like to pursue the subject.

But when Ethel was changing her dress for dinner, (for Colonel Wreford kept London hours for himself and those who chose to follow him, and *this night* Ethel preferred her uncle's society to Drellington church,) Pansy's questions reverted to her mind. "How odd that Pansy should have hit upon that idea," she thought. She was certainly not in love with Edgar, though she would not deny to herself, *only* herself, that she thought she *could* be happy with him,—yes, without any doubt she thought she could; and if some time hence—say two years, (young ladies always say two years even in engagements, where there is no rhyme or reason for any delay at all on either side,) he thought, on getting a living, that she would make him a nice wife, and was to ask her,—yes, she certainly should be happy. And then she raised the curtain just a

wee bit to have a peep at the probable scene beyond, when it disclosed such a vista of bright unalloyed happiness, that she let it fall again in dismay and alarm, that she had been so foolish,—so premature. Ethel, she said to herself, he does not yet even care for you; even in his sister's life he shunned you, has shunned you more since her death. She was angry, mortified, and ashamed of herself, and hastily finishing her toilet she descended the stairs resolved never again to let her thoughts revert to the subject—for the present!

Colonel Wreford kept his promise on Christmas day, and the result was gratifying to the whole party in many respects.—To him, for Pansy's playing astonished and delighted him; and the whole service was conducted in a manner that almost made him think seriously, which in the case of a man who, be he ever so good, is distracted from morning till night with worldly schemes, is worthy of remark.—To Mrs. Wreford, for she saw in Edgar a gradual return to his old manner; his sermon was of the same old persuasive kind, with the same indefinable sweetness of manner in it as in former days.—To Pansy, because she was in great feather.—To Ethel, because Edgar by her instrumentality was on his road back from Mopedom.—And to Angelica, because she detested Drelington church and the vicar, with his heavy sermons into the bargain. But the main result was, that the Colonel persuaded Edgar to eat his Christmas dinner at Newlands, in the midst of a strictly family circle, in which the young folks predominated,—little Nelthorpes and other scions of the different branches of that distinguished house, &c.

And after that Edgar became a more constant visitor at Newlands, coming and going when he liked, and always welcome. Nevertheless, he still avoided intimacy with Ethel; he could not avoid

her society, and to the charm of that he resigned himself without restraint, but he took care not to be alone with her, and she equally satisfied with the same state of things never courted or expected more. Mrs. Wreford's fears by degrees became quite disarmed, and she began to think that he was quite as likely to fall in love with Jane Turnbull, or Henrietta Gascoigne, as with Ethel or Pansy, and that probably he would die a bachelor after all.



CHAPTER XVI.

ETHEL'S NURSE.

AND so the next two months passed by, and that of March was about to commence. The Colonel had left for town at the end of January for the meeting of Parliament, but not without completing the details of that scheme with regard to Ethel, which he had commenced planning during the previous summer. She was to make her appearance in the London world after Easter. There had been no great difficulty in gaining her acquiescence to this arrangement, when the time drew near. To be sure she detested the very name of London. In her mind it was associated with everything which was stupid, unhealthy, vain, and heartless. But she saw how her uncle, whom she dearly loved, had set his heart upon it, and from Markham's sermons to his humble flock, she had become more and more impressed with the truth, that there were disagreeable duties also in her station of life to be performed, which she ought to court, and discharge cheerfully rather than shun.

There certainly was one doubt which hung over her, which she would have given worlds to have had removed,—that doubt which Pansy's suspicions had raised. If she were only certain that some day, she did not care when,—some day Edgar would ask her that question,—she would count as nothing, whatever

difficulties might intervene. As it was, she remembered that she had been unhappy in Scarborough, unhappy in Warwickshire; how far more wretched she would be in London! Perhaps when she returned in August, for she had bargained for no sea-side excursion this year, a point which the Colonel under the circumstances thought it prudent to yield, he might *then* have felt her absence so keenly, that he would speak; surely, if ever he spoke at all, he would speak *then*. That hope should sustain her through all—April, May, June, July—four months—that was the period to which her self-imposed two years had dwindled already. But alas! how reflection delights to sport with us all! Supposing he got a living, and nothing was more likely; and supposing that she returned—to find him gone: an indefinable terror seized her one night, as she lay awake tortured by her fancies, that he would never speak at all. And then she thought, what will become of me? and Pansy's words flashed through her mind,—“If anything went wrong, Ethel, it would break your heart;” and Eva's too, “Oh! Ethel, never be in love.” Had she then all this time been so mad? “Pansy, Eva, it is too late,” she muttered, her voice stifled within the pillows. Alas, how many months had she loved him without a suspicion even of it! how many months had mistaken the warmest homage her heart could offer for the tamer affection due to him from Eva's sister!

But the Colonel's plans were in the full career of accomplishment. The house in Belgravia had been taken for the season, and the painters, and the plasterers, and the upholsterers were all exercising their ruinous inventions on it.

“What a strange chap that Wreford is,” said Anstruther of the Blues at his club one day. “He keeps this beautiful niece of his in the country until she loses her heart to the Parson, because

there is no choice between him and the Apothecary, and now he is going to bring the fruit to the London market, when the country bumpkins have rubbed all the down off it."

"That won't go down, Anstruther," interrupted Major Neville. "The Parson at Drellington is old enough to be even *your* father, and he has got a wife and a house full of children into the bargain. You want to throw us all off the scent, but it won't do, old boy."

"It is true for all that; there is more than one parson in those parts: as is always the case when there is a good thing of this kind to be picked up," said Anstruther. "There is a young parson I tell you, with just enough Puseyism to sit well on him, that has done the mischief. Bless your heart, ask Manvers there; he saw her at Scarborough last year, ask him whether there is much hope for the cockneys."

"But how do you know all this?" exclaimed several.

"Beeze told me," said Anstruther; "you know his place is close by there. He says that the young parson, and this girl have been ready to make a match of it any time this six months; and that if Wreford wishes to keep her to himself, he had better get the gentleman appointed to some bishopric in Tasmania, or anywhere thereabouts, without delay."

Colonel Wreford heard this concluding sentence, as he happened himself to be entering the club, and thought the information conveyed in it so important, that he put himself in communication with Sir Henry Beeze without delay. But with all his anxiety he could squeeze very little news out of that frigid baronet worth having. Sir Henry said "that really he never meddled with his neighbour's concerns, and that consequently he could

enlighten him very little. He knew that it was the general opinion of the world in Drellington that the position in which Miss Conway stood to Mr. Markham from the death of his sister, and from the similarity of their characters, would lead before long to an attachment, if it had not done so already. Mrs. Turnbull thought so; her son George Turnbull, who knew the Curate better than any one in the place, and who was very likely to be in his secrets, treated it as a certainty, and had even withdrawn his own pretensions from a conviction of it. As for himself Sir Henry Beeze said he must confess, though he had not the remotest ground to found his opinion upon, that he had all along fancied also that such would be the case. It was more an irresistible conviction, arising from all the circumstances, than a conclusion founded on any course of reasoning, which made everybody think alike on the subject."

And the Colonel too, now that the subject had been brought before him in this way, was astonished at his own blindness,—“Why, gracious powers,” he said to himself, as he recalled Ethel’s conversation on the morning they were discussing Pansy’s chances with the Curate, “the girl is over head and ears in love with him now, for all I know; my only hope is in Markham: he is safe, I’ll swear; and he is too honourable to encourage any such thoughts, even if he had them. No: it won’t do to hurry matters—I must let them take their course now, and trust to my luck till April.”

A correspondence ensued on this subject between the Colonel and his better half, the result of which was highly satisfactory to him. She allowed the truth of the impression in Drellington, to which Sir Henry Beeze had borne testimony, and allowed also that at one time it had forced itself on her mind as well. She had thought, that the characters of the

two had so much in them to attract each other; but she had long since discarded this idea. It seemed in every other respect so utterly groundless, that she had not even mentioned it to him. On Markham's side there seemed positive indifference, and as to Ethel, though it was her delight to talk to him about Eva, she did not for any other subject appear to care about his company. The best ground they had for security in her opinion was this, that if any mischief had really existed at the time, that every one was determined to think they were becoming attached, that mischief would have blown up long before the present time; as for a secret engagement, she scouted the idea, for Markham was the last person to suggest any thing underhand, and Ethel the last girl to consent to it.

The Colonel had a great opinion of his wife's sagacity, so that his doubts were considerably removed by this expression of her opinion. She had been too so long *au fait* of the subject, that her remarks were entitled to the highest respect. Still he wrote to her not to slumber; in many cases of this sort, the mischief arose just at the time when the parties interested felt themselves the most secure. It would not do now to show Markham the cold shoulder, but it should not be *his*, the Colonel's, fault, if he had not been superseded at Holycross by the time that Ethel returned, if she returned unmarried. He wished matters to go on the same as before, lest suspicion should be excited that he was aware of the danger. No diminution of civility to Markham was to be observed. But if the Colonel could possibly get the house in town ready for their reception, he would bring them all back with him when he came down to that meeting of his constituents, which he would be obliged to attend the last week in March. It was a bore that Easter fell so late this year, &c., &c.

This correspondence took place after the first week in February, about ten days subsequent to the Colonel's departure for the metropolis; and as I have told the reader, we are now in the first week in March. The chance of getting the house in town ready before the end of the month, did not seem a very cheering one: but that was a subject of small importance to the Colonel, for his apprehensions were by this time quite lulled. As the time drew on, that undefinable dread of going away, increased on Ethel, until she sometimes held her breath when she reflected on it; but if she arrested her power of breathing, she could not arrest the progress of time. Edgar was continually at Newlands; he fancied that its society was necessary to him after his parochial labours, or the dull solitude of his own home, for two or three days together. He generally came in for a couple of hours at night, and would read poetry to Mrs. Wreford, mostly Shakespeare. He excelled in this, and every time he parted from them, after charming the whole party by this exercise, and with the usual shake of the hand giving Ethel one of his pleasing, grateful smiles, (for he never forgot even in his looks *that* Sunday,) her heart smote her as the words arose to her lips, "Oh, when will he speak?" But in other respects Edgar kept a tight hand over himself. "April will soon be here," he often thought, "and then one more struggle—and then the victory." Ah! me, what a word! is there ever any victory in the struggles of merely physical contests that carries with it such distress, such regrets as this word here? But Markham knew that for this were we sent into the world. "Temper, purify *all* my affections, O LORD," he would ever repeat, as in the first hours of his bitter experiences, "and then shall they be ready to be sanctified to Thy glory." But he forgot that he who daily used the prayer,

"Lead us not into temptation," had no right to enter voluntarily into a temptation so powerful as the society of one who was very likely to make him forget his solemn resolution to devote himself with an undivided heart to his holy office.

Ethel's mind at this time was in that state, which in a young lady of ardent temperament often precedes a very serious illness, and there is no knowing whether some such result might not have very summarily demolished the regularity of Colonel Wreford's plans, had not a train of circumstances unimportant in themselves, as indeed many such things which form a part in the grand framework of Divine governance, seem to human comprehension, completely changed the whole aspect of these affairs.

Ethel had in her early days, like the rest of the world, possessed that useful adjunct to childhood, a nurse. This woman, whose name was then Coleman, had been chosen by her mother previous to the occasion which brought little Ethel into the world, simply because she was the only Roman Catholic in Callington, or indeed in Drellington either. Edward Conway, out of respect to his wife's memory, had been loth to remove this woman from the care of her young charge during the age of nurture, but when that time had expired, he gave her clearly to understand, that she must either become a Protestant, or leave his service. He used afterwards always to boast, that he had converted her; and it is certain that she remained in his service till Ethel was twelve years old, when she took it into her head to marry some good-for-nothing Drellington bumpkin, who beat her, and thereby entailed on herself a life of intolerable misery. Between Ethel and her, whether she apostatized or not, a very durable affection existed: and Coleman, or Smedley, as her name was now, had ample rea-

son for never regretting her conversion during several years. Now this Coleman, at the present point of our history, fell sick, and it shortly appeared would not recover. Ethel dearly loved her, and wished to be constantly with her during her last hours; perhaps the nature of the occupation too drew off the ever-wearying pressure of those thoughts, which were now her constant attendants. Mrs. Wreford never interfered with these arrangements; but as Newlands was some way off from the sick woman's abode, and as Ethel might be there daily till a late hour, it was thought better that she should sleep at her other aunt's, Mrs. Wilford's, at the Hermitage, until the event was decided.

Now as Coleman approached that hour to which all mankind is slowly hastening, it became clear that she retained considerable attachment to the denomination, from which Edward Conway had converted her; and, as there was no Roman Catholic priest to be had, she pressed Ethel very hard for her influence to procure Edgar Markham's attendance at her bedside, feeling instinctively that he was indeed a priest, though not of her own communion. But Ethel showed great repugnance to any such proceeding. In the first place, as she told her, Mr. Markham was just as much opposed to Roman Catholic tenets as the Vicar himself; and more so, because he fully understood the line of demarcation between the two Churches, which was more than the Vicar did: and, in the second place, it was out of Markham's parish. But Coleman begged and implored, "if Mr. Markham would only say a prayer at her bedside she should die happy." And so it was, that one Wednesday evening, about six o'clock, Markham found the two following notes lying on his table:

" Vicarage, Drellington,

" Wednesday.

" DEAR MARKHAM,

" One Smedley, *née* Coleman, formerly Miss Conway's nurse, lies sick in this parish. She prefers seeing you to my Curate Christopher. She was originally from Callington, in your parish. Will you see her? it will oblige Miss Conway, and no feelings of delicacy on my account or Christopher's need interfere.

" Yours truly,

" GEORGE TURNBULL."

The other note was in pencil, and ran thus :

" DEAR MR. MARKHAM,

" Pray come as soon as you can : the house is in Swallow's Lane, near the meadows. Please come quickly to oblige me.

" E. C.

" Wednesday Afternoon."

It was all very well to say " Please come quickly," but there was the Wednesday evening service to be rendered first at Holycross. That ended, Edgar drove Pansy back as far as Newlands lodge-gates, where he left her, proceeded on to Drellington, consigned Sugarplum to the care of the ostler at the Rose, and arrived at Swallow's Lane just as the clock struck nine.

But he was too late for any practical benefit which his presence might have produced. Coleman was speechless, and at her last moment; and except the prayers beside the bed with Ethel, and the pleasure his coming gave her, he might just as well have remained at home. When all was over, he proceeded to escort Ethel home. Their way, the distance not being great, lay through some mea-

dows at the rear of the village, and across a large piece of waste ground, which separated the back of the Vicarage from the shrubberies of the Hermitage. It was one of those regal nights which take us by surprise in this country: the moon nearly at the full, shed a light as clear for every thing but smaller objects as the sun at noon-day: the air was fresh, but for the season of the year not cold.

Ethel first broke silence.

"It was very good of you to come."

"I wish I could have come earlier and on a pleasanter errand to you," he said. "You seem to have more than your share of afflictions,—another friend struck down, even though an humble one."

"I do not feel this so much," she said: "I suppose I am getting callous; but I do not look on sorrow in the same light, since I have seen you bear yours."

"I never bore it at all, till you taught me. Do you see this?" he said, showing a bunch of dried forget-me-nots; "these are my companions. I have never returned them, though I knew you left them accidentally."

"I have not asked for them," she replied, as if fearing he was going to do so, and blushing deeply; and then in a low voice, "you must want a companion sometimes, and these flowers can give you little enough trouble to keep. But tell me, Mr. Markham, you used to say to us that you thought, when Eva died, her presence would always remain with you, perhaps her spirit. Have you ever realised that thought?"

"Continually: I have had Eva with me days and nights—not in form, but sometimes even in sound. I have detected her speaking to me in the wind, or in the notes of a distant chime. This very night, at that bed-side, I felt her beside me,

and could not help knowing that she was smiling at you."

Ethel gave a start—then recovering herself. "You must be very happy to be able to feel this presence. I wish I could, though I too have my tokens of her existence. Look up there," she said. They were now on the strip of waste land between the Vicarage and the Hermitage, and close to the gate of the latter. "Look up there; you will think me very foolish, but you see that star."

"Yes! but I am not astronomer enough to tell you the name of it. It is difficult to see any star too in this light, the moon is so splendid to-night."

"I am glad you cannot tell me its name; it would destroy my romance. When I was a little girl, I used to think that that star was my mother, and it has often looked down on me when I was unhappy. Near it, if you look, there is another star, not less in brightness, though less in magnitude. I never noticed that smaller star till Eva died."

Here for a moment she paused, and as Edgar gazed at her, he thought he never saw her look so lovely. Her slight figure, drawn up to its full height, her bonnet thrown back off her head, being loosely fastened, that beautiful face the outline of which looked the very perfection of finish in the pale moonlight; the large dark eyes still glittering with the traces of recent tears, gazing with a look of anxious interest into the blue vault above. Edgar's resolution was giving way; and his heart beat so that he could not reply. So he continued looking on her, and with each look losing a step of the firm ground he had chosen for himself.

"I have also often thought of late," she continued, "that we two in our turn might become two other stars like them, and then all four would go on shining brightly in our 'purity always together.'"

Edgar's heart bounded ; a mist seemed to cloud over his spirit ; the power of reasoning, and almost of thought, left him : all he beheld was her, Eva's nurse, comforter, and friend, and now his own, if he would. Yes, she loved him ; those clear eyes said so more plainly than speech could ever express. Self-sacrifice,—self-denial,—consideration for the wishes of the Colonel and his wife, were all forgotten in that hour of joy.

" *Always together*, Ethel ?" he repeated.

" Yes, Edgar, always together !" she returned, while she raised her sweet young face on him, the image of pure affection and truth. " Would not that be happiness ?"

" Yes, Ethel ; but here on earth we have yet something to do before we can join those bright spirits above. Our desires, hopes, affections to restrain, perhaps mortify, before we can become as them."

He paused, and looked fondly on that dear face, while her countenance showed a half fearful, half hopeful expression, which told him that the time for struggling was now past for him, he must go on.

" Ethel, you spoke of four just now. Of these, two are gone, and two, you and I, remain. It is no use for us to talk of happiness with them, for we are here. But there is such a thing here on earth as union for those who love. You and I, Ethel, if *we* were '*always together* ;' think you that this would be happiness ?"

" Yes, Edgar," she said, again looking up ; " the only happiness *here*—on *earth*."

" Ethel, my beloved," he cried, catching her to his heart. And she answered with the same cry of wild joy, " Edgar."

One moment they stood thus, in all the intoxicating joy of a love acknowledged and returned.

You and I, reader, have perhaps crowded the hopes of a life in one such moment.

The clang of a distant gate closing roused Ethel. Her head drooped a little, and she said, "I must go," and they parted. At the turn of the shrubbery she looked round, and Edgar saw the moonlight on that fair face with its half parted lips, an expression which she always showed when smiling—she was gone.

The tears were stealing rapidly down her cheeks as she entered her aunt's drawing-room and lighted a candle at the side table, and retired without a word. Mrs. Wilford was playing picquet with Mrs. Pander, which must have been an agreeable pastime, as the latter did not understand an iota of the game.

"Poor Ethel!" said the former, when she had gone, "she has had another loss; her nurse, Coleman, is dead."

Were those tears for Coleman?

Did Ethel mourn her nurse?

No! *those* were no tears of grief; *that* was hardly the manner of a mourner, when she closed passionately the bed-chamber door; when she let her bonnet and shawl fall hastily on the ground; when she covered her face with her hands, and cried by turns—O! joy! He loved her! must have loved her for so very very long. "Ethel, my beloved," the words rang in her ears, and that brief embrace,—it told more than hours of words—it told of doubts, scruples, hopes—but it said more,—“Oh, my Ethel, I would not, for thou wert too great a prize to hope for. I would not, for I was unworthy to kiss thy feet. I would not—and in the moment that I refused the prize, it was mine. Ethel, my beloved.” No more doubt, no more terror at that *hour* of departure! If she went, it would be as *his*, to return shortly—more

than ever *his* ; perhaps not to go at all—because *his*. Oh! happy night! when that star shone so brightly—her mother's star and Eva's too—that not the radiance of the queen of night even could engulf their glory. And she flew to the window, threw it open, and gazed in joy and gratitude on those stars, still so distantly smiling upon her. And then—then—bowed down to Him Who is the FATHER of All lights, and from Whom come “all perfect things, as well as all those *good* things,” which if not perfect here, are good to those who use them well, and are but reflections of that perfection, from which they derive their light.

Mrs. Wilford must have been strangely surprised, when she entered the room, to find her niece half undressed, with her long black hair in all its luxuriance, reaching below her waist, half in tears, half laughing, and with a brilliancy in her eyes, which seemed to eclipse the very stars, at which she was gazing so intently. Had it been Mrs. Wreford instead, some conclusion might have been drawn from these circumstances, not very propitious to Ethel's happiness. But luckily, Mrs. Wilford happened to have just a scintilla more common sense in her character than her sister, Lady Nelthorpe—no more, and she therefore persisted in attributing all Ethel's agitation to grief at her late bereavement.

“My child! You must not take on so ; you must go to bed.”

Ethel did not want to go to bed. She had a volume of reflections, hopes, surmises, &c. to read through, which would probably keep her up the whole night. “She was very well,” she said, “very well ; it was very kind of Aunt Wilford, but she wished to be let alone.”

This was too much however, for Aunt Wilford's kind heart, so she set to work, tying up her niece's

hair, and reading her some of those beautiful lessons on humility in affliction, and God's tenderness in the calamities He sends upon His chosen servants, the worth of which Ethel was of too religious a disposition not to acknowledge, but which unfortunately were rather mal-apropos in the present instance.

At last she was gone, and Ethel was in bed. What was *he* doing, she wondered? and when should she be able to speak to him again? Should she tell any one? no. He might have many schemes and plans to tell her first. She ought to tell Aunt Wreford certainly—but still he might wish to arrange it his own way, as he was always right—he did not know how to do wrong, and it could not be for many days. She would tell Pansy first. How Pansy would laugh at her! But she did not care for that, for Pansy would be very happy too. When should they be married? and should they live at Holycross? what did it matter where they lived? They would be “always together.” Those were the words. Dear Edgar! And how he loved her; his manner told her that. And those words, “Ethel, my beloved,” and Ethel at this very satisfactory point, fell asleep.



CHAPTER XVII.

MARKHAM'S ANTECEDENTS.

BUT if Ethel was so overjoyed with the foretaste of happiness, of which she had but just sipped, what was the state of Edgar's mind, as, turning Sugar-plum from off the half-repaired road, he pushed him into a canter through the moonlight over the turf of Uppershot Common. It was of no use now to stop and ask whether he had done right; that moment, that embrace in him too had done its work. Conscience could hardly be said to have become deadened. Up to the present time he had followed a strict line of self-denial, because he had never thought of inquiring whether that young heart might not be his own spontaneously. Gratitude to the family, who had lavished all their care on him and his beloved Eva, had been his first idea. It was a sort of sacred duty in his eyes not to disturb the views they might have in store for her. But when he saw that Ethel's heart was all along his own without his seeking, the pride of being its possessor banished all these thoughts. She was his own.

But it was now too late to think of this. "Ethel, Ethel, mine, mine!" were the words of his heart, ringing in unison with the rattling of the harness made by his pony in its course. Was there ever anything like the happiness of that hour? Lovers may well be said to be "moon-struck."

Still, when Edgar began to get a little cooler, and to gather up the tangled threads of his reflections, painful anticipations would force themselves on his mind. Not so much for himself—no! for such a prize, what would he not undergo? but for her, the gentle plant, reared in tenderness, in the duties of obedience to those who were in the place of parents to her. She was his now, and nothing should ever induce him to part with his treasure: but for her, tears, bitter tears, perhaps falsehoods, perchance to lower him whom she loved in her estimation; at any rate, facts so transposed, as to make her dream of happiness a blotched, ill-daubed piece of scene painting.

Two terrible words stood out in bold relief in his mind—"his connexions:" not in their respectability, for in that respect they were as good as hers, but in their relation to him. These words racked his brain all night, while her dreams were only of "Ethel, my beloved;" and when he rose in the morning, unrefreshed, feverish, distressed in mind, these words first in broad daylight attacked him in a hideous reality.

He was not, however, a man to be frightened at mere fancies; and on rising this Thursday morning, with the full consciousness of the splendid future opened to him in the possession of Ethel's love, he set himself seriously to think upon the chance of removing the difficulty which his relations with the surviving members of the Markham family presented, and which no doubt the reader, from the account of Eva's funeral, has already surmised to have existed. He would go at once to Boxholme to his brother: that brother had, in the sorrow consequent on Eva's death, implored him to come; and he, in his stubborn, angry, unchristian affliction, had declined. Perhaps now he would not be received; but, no matter, he would go. They

might spit in his face, and he would bear it for her sake ; yes, he would go to-day. And he wrote at once three letters—one to a friend in Gramford to take his duty ; one to the Vicar of Drellington, to excuse himself for the same evening ; and one to Pansy, to state that he was obliged to go and see his elder brother, and giving her some directions respecting her choral duties. This last letter he concluded with a few words to Ethel, as follows : “ I go to remove brambles from a path hitherto little trodden by me : such things must exist in my life now no more.”

And this brings us to the question,—Who is Edgar Markham ?

Robert Markham the elder was an eminent conveyancer. He was of an ancient, but somewhat decayed family,—evidenced every now and then, as his prosperity increased, by a number of cousins and connections starting up on unexpected occasions, and with most undesirable occupations,—and his sole object in life was, by the instrumentality of his profession, to retrieve that for his name which misfortune, misconduct, or what not had lost. Years of steady, dry, musty application enabled him to do this. When his youngest daughter Eva appeared in the world for her first season, her father had been enabled to purchase from Lord Stokenchurch, whose turf and card predilections obliged him to dispose of that bagatelle, the well-known estate of Boxholme Park, near Aylesbury ; and he could now die happy, leaving a son with a fortune to uphold the name.

We have seen different shades of religious opinion in this little story : the Markham family differed from all these. Drellington had at least the externals of religion—they went to Church ; the Markhams never did, unless they liked it. Drellington went to Church because their forefathers

did, and because its representatives of the present day did. The family of Markham knew nothing of what their forefathers did, and cared less what their contemporaries did. Old Markham enjoyed his Sunday, after six days' occupation in searching for terms, in reading a novel on a sofa, and was perfectly satisfied if his family just knew that it was Sunday—that was all.

"I say, Anna," he would call out to his wife, "if you don't go to Church, just don't let those boys think it is the same as any other day. Make them read the service, and that sort of thing."

And as Mrs. Markham very seldom did go to Church, for the simple reason, that no known body of ladies'-maids ever created could get her up in time enough for the occasion, she set her three boys to read the prayers in her presence; Robert *doing* the Clergyman, and imitating, in his voice, gestures, and manner of blowing his nose, the last specimen of that commodity he had witnessed; Edgar partaking of the lessons, and exceedingly indignant, as he thought he read best, that he was not allowed to have the principal place; and Letitia crying because she might not read the Litany, which Mrs. Markham refused, on the pretence that nobody but a person in Holy Orders could read that part of the service, but really because, by the time she had arrived at this stage, she was heartily sick of the whole proceeding. The boys, however, thought it good fun, and on the whole, barring the squabbles that arose out of it, rather liked it than otherwise. It can, therefore, be easily understood, that the entire family were as godless in their thoughts, habits, and speech, as any that can be met with at the present day even in the most godless circles of English society.

One exception, nevertheless, there was. The three elder girls, named respectively Mary, Letitia,

and Lucy, who were all married at the time this story commenced, were educated at home; and whatever their accomplishments, differed in no respect from the rest in their moral training, except that the eldest thought it her duty *almost daily* to be shocked at the wickedness of the rest. But Eva, far the youngest of the family, had been saved by the forethought of her brother Edgar from a fate which at one time threatened her,—the fate of being educated by her elder sisters,—and had been sent to a boarding-school in the country for five years, admirably conducted by some ladies of decayed fortune, who soon learnt to value the worth of that pure and spotless heart, which by them was tended and cultured, as such a soil alone deserved.

Of the boys, Robert was sent to Sandhurst, where he did nothing; a matter of not the least account, as he was to inherit the paternal acres as soon as his father had made them and left them to him. Edgar went to Harrow and Cambridge, and showed evidence of such good parts, that his father intended him for the bar; and though he never advanced very far in even the necessary preparation for that great profession, yet it is fair to say that he did his best, and at the age of twenty-one was eating his terms at the Temple, and occupying a very airy locality in its precincts (I do not know how many hundred feet above the level of the Thames), for which he was paying a rental equivalent to the income of a very thriving parson in a country living.

What he might have been must ever be a subject of speculation to those who are sufficiently interested in his history to think about it; for fortune at one fell swoop demolished all his plans and aspirations, and that at a time when they were none of them so far advanced, that he could be over san-

guine as to their success. At the period of which we now speak, he was full of life, spirits, and ambition; in love with his cousin, to whom he was to be married in two years (of course two years), if they were of the same mind, &c., &c. He was the favourite of the family, particularly fond of his sisters,—three of whom, for Eva was then in the nursery, were really jealous of the influence he exercised; though in family squabbles they always appealed to him for assistance, which he always afforded with his whole heart and soul.

I do not know whether this family were singular in their ways in this respect, and if so, whether some of my readers will find my notice of them exaggerated or improbable, but as I have reason to believe that though they may be an extreme instance, still similar instances do at all events exist in some form, and that pretty abundantly, I must throw myself on the experience of those who really do know the conflicting interests existing in large families, as to whether in their day they have not realized something very like the characters in the Markham family.

It was the year preceding the Railway panic, the year when poor and rich, illustrious and obscure, calculating and rash, plunged headlong into that most seductive species of gambling. Gambling is an awkward word! and the habit put before the Englishman in the form which most obviously explains its meaning, produces a horror and disgust in every one of well-regulated mind; in the form, however, of dabbling in scrip, scrip too that was to prove mere waste paper, it produced no such feelings, as all the world is aware. Edgar Markham's was just the mind to be attracted by it; like his betters he *did* a little scrip,—and then a little more, and lent his name to various little projects, for connecting localities unknown to each other in

particular, or to the world in general. In short, he got over head and ears into it, and then came the smash, and then—

Robert Markham, senior, did not gamble, and his dismay consequently at his son's conduct took nearly ten years off his life. It was of no use to tell him that the high in rank, in morals, in worldly estimation, had done the same (though to say the truth nobody stuck up for the young man even to that extent). *Gambling!* that was the word. His son a gambler!—and when this idea had got a morbid possession of the mind of this old man, who was as ignorant of the world as a mere child, *it stayed there*. Far different were the feelings of the other members of the family, and herein the consequences of their moral training became apparent. They cared little for the indulgence on the part of their brother in this vice, or whether it was a vice at all. The father looked at the moral pollution and stain on them all, himself included; the family on the consequences only which might result to themselves individually; *self* was their battle word in every contest of their lives. Mary had married an East India director, and was indignant because *her* husband would be expected to come forward, and help him out of his difficulties; a feeling which the worthy gentleman shared to the full. Letitia had married the son of a city merchant, and about three months before had presented him with a little girl, who had been baptized after its mother; she had long had an eye to a slice of the fortune her father was accumulating for the eldest son, and which she had a shrewd idea, Edgar, had he been successful in life, would have rather interfered with her obtaining; her cue was therefore to increase the old gentleman's horror of the crime.—“Only think, such a character as that of a gambler hangs to a family for generations; all my Letty's pros-

pects in the world will be ruined if this misguided boy is not got out of the country," (Letty being three months' old at the time,) "Australia—any place where he can hide his shame let him go to." Lucy was on the eve of being married to a young barrister, and two leading ideas seized on her mind: first, that if Edgar was not got rid of, *her* marriage would be broken off; secondly, that if Edgar could be induced to hide his diminished head for the term of his natural life, all the vast legal connection which her father possessed, and which would have undoubtedly supported her brother, would be transferred to her husband.

Robert Markham was, as we have said, a weak man, bound up in his practice, and a nonentity in everything else. Had he been a man of much stronger mind, it is doubtful whether he could have resisted the bias of these three angelic influences. "Certainly," he said, "Edgar must go abroad till these matters can be investigated and settled; whether he can show his head afterwards in society, is a question for future consideration,—and until he does this, I can have no communication with him whatever." Robert, the eldest son, was not quite so bitter against his brother as the others, but he believed his liabilities were much heavier than they really were; and fancying that his own ultimate prospects would suffer, he went too with the stream. The actual husbands of the two elder sisters, and the prospective husband of the third, were of course all in the same boat; they believed that if Edgar remained he would go through the Insolvent Court, a proceeding that would damage them most seriously, besides that they for appearance' sake would have to make some sacrifice in his behalf. And so he was to go on the distinct understanding from his father, that his affairs were to be investigated with a view to settlement, a pledge which, when

given, was never meant to be kept; for the instant his back was turned every one of his own family proceeded to blacken his name, and to attribute his flight to deliberate villany on his own part, when it was the result of unworthy and dishonest machinations on theirs, set on foot with the intention of preventing him from returning at all.

It did seem a curious thing, that in a family, of which he had been the acknowledged favourite, not a voice should have been raised, not a hand lifted up in his favour. The reason is plain to a religious mind.—No one of them possessed a social virtue; “They knew not CHRIST.” Not one of them had cared for their brother, except for their own ends. Letitia was a peculiarly hard instance; she was the nearest to Edgar in age, and had been his play-fellow from childhood; she was the bitterest against him in his misfortune; but he knew not this till years afterwards. At the time he fully realised, how difficult his sisters’ positions in respect to their husbands were, and his kind heart gave them credit for the wish to help him without the power. It was better so, perhaps. He had only tasted of the cup at present; he probably could not have drunk it all at once.

And so Edgar went for a time into Belgium; it was better for him that he did, until his mind, sadly shaken by these events, resumed its accustomed tone. And he wrote to his cousin, releasing her from her engagement, and giving her an outline of his imprudence, in which light he begged her to look at it, and not as his enemies represented it. He stayed on the continent for about one year, when the serious state in which he left his affairs became for various reasons so far modified, that if he had had an adviser he might easily have returned to England, and have commenced life, as if nothing had happened. In fact, as everybody who remembers anything of

those times may have guessed, Edgar was a mere nobody, and his liabilities a mere flea-bite among the great names who figured in similar difficulties. As for being a provisional director, and promoter, and what not, in the schemes and bubbles, which he in his inexperience thought to be enterprises of importance and integrity, who cared for *him*? There was my Lord this, and Alderman that, and a banker or so, and not unfrequently a statesman, whom the sufferers by such matters looked to, before they gave Mr. Edgar Markham, the law student, even a thought. No doubt they would bleed him too for his connections' sake, if they could get no better redress; but he was gone. His family shook their heads;—Mary's husband said, "when he married into the family he did not bargain for this;" and looked so supernaturally terrible, that people were afraid to press the subject, or if they did he would clench the matter with an untruth,—a line of argument in which he much excelled,—which put Edgar's character in the light of those who, when they leave this country with their characters blasted, do so at her Majesty's expense, instead of at their own; although this of course was only left to inference,—no more! And so did the others. Letitia, at the time she pretended to bewail his fate, as the fall of one she dearly loved, did not fail to represent it as something too mysterious to speak of, except ambiguously. "But, my dear Mrs. Stackpoole," said an acquaintance one day, who had often seen Edgar, and had coveted the possession of him vastly, "what has he done? It was only those stupid railways; and many better men than he, who were quite as bad, hold up their heads in the world as much as ever."

"My dear Marianne," Letitia would reply, "you

Marianne said was perfectly true.

Edgar was forgotten. Many of these schemes were wound up, and others compounded. Edgar had paid out of his income any needy ones who had suffered from his folly; and, if he had chosen to come to England permanently, he might have done so. But he was young and inexperienced, and he had no adviser; and what he wanted in this, the family turned to their own advantage. They knew well that if he returned, he would sooner or later know their conduct. They had no reason to consider him vindictive; but they knew his abilities, his untiring diligence when he had an object. If punishing them were to be the object, would not he do it? Besides, Robert the brother had turned out so stupid, that if once Edgar had got hold of him, the door of Boxholme, just bought at an immense expense, would be shut in their faces. The only plan was to work old Markham on the leading idea in his mind, that his son Edgar had not a 'shred of character left.' This was not difficult. The old man, who, as he got on in years became tenderly anxious about the young man's future, was induced, from an idea that it was for his ultimate advantage, to use his influence to get Edgar to Australia, which he did by paying his passage, and allowing him £200 per annum as long as he remained there.

Edgar committed one or two very grave faults in consenting to the course which he was thus induced to adopt, from the moment he first left England to that in which he embarked at Liverpool for the last step. In the first place, from his father's behaviour, he took the impression, without considering of it, that he had committed a very great crime, and this mistake did not become apparent to his mind till he fully realized its consequences. He never asked for advice among the many friends, which as a university man he must have possessed,

because he thought he had acted in some manner unbecoming a gentleman. He literally lost his friends because he would not use them as such. When he was gone, many who were interested in him asked for his address in order to write to him, but it was always on some pretence or another withheld. To those who were more than usually importunate respecting him, the idea was conveyed, that he had done something of which the members of his family did not like to speak, and an impression produced merely by such charitable inuendos got abroad, that Edgar Markham in his railway escapades had somehow been induced to use his father's name, and it was vaguely hinted that documents existed which could prove it. I do not say that his sisters had an idea that his character was so completely blasted as this imputation conveyed. But it was their conduct, and the conduct of their husbands which encouraged this notion, and so, not for the first or last time, reader, in this life, a young man of good intentions and spotless integrity was sacrificed to the bitter jealousies of relatives, who were unworthy to bear the same name.

Another fault he committed was in leaving his creditors as he did. Because creditors they were, though they might not in all cases look to him, if they had a better quarter to charge with their claims. A man may owe a duty to his parents, brothers, and sisters; he went, as he thought, to save them exposure: but he owes a far higher duty to those whom his extravagancies and imprudence may have injured, strangers though they may be. Had he remained he would have kept his honourable name, (though, it is true, no one was eventually injured by his going) and his brothers' and sisters' arrows would have fallen on him without points.

The reasons he consented to the final arrange-

ment were these. He felt sick at heart and desolate; he had at last written to several old acquaintances, but they, perhaps, for the reasons aforesaid, had taken no notice of his letters; he had never received an answer to notes addressed to his sisters, or any recognition of his existence from them whatever,—why should he remain in Europe? Change of scene and climate might raise fresh hopes, and ambitions. It is hard at twenty-two to feel friendless, particularly when the heart is born to love. Ah me! what desolate hours, what regrets, what bitter burning impatience, before that heart was cheered again!

It is not necessary for our present purpose, that I should dwell long on his history in the antipodes. I need only say that nothing prospered there with him; his education was not of a sort to be of the smallest use to him in the colonies. After his arrival the gold fever broke out, and he was, foolishly enough, induced to try that; but his frame was too delicate for the work. He found no gold, but caught a bad fever instead, which nearly killed him, and incapacitated him for any sort of exertion during six months. He passed three good years of disappointment, and at its expiration his heart was as desolate as ever, and he pined for the old mists and fogs of his native land.

His illness, and the continual wear and tear to which disappointment and anxiety had subjected him, caused at this time a considerable change in his demeanour and bearing. He had up to the time of his misfortunes been full of life, humour, and animal spirits. Now that quiet, half melancholy look, which we pointed out in introducing him to the reader, began gradually to steal over him. It was not that he moped; he was only beginning to think seriously, to recall his life of the past few years step by step, and to consider, whether a great

deal of his sorrows had not been owing to his own want of courage to look them in the face, and a great deal more to his own neglect in not seeking for consolation, where it can alone be found. When he thought how completely he had been deserted by everything on earth, he the more wondered at his folly in this last respect.

Herein he was assisted by the advice of one of the few friends he had made abroad; one of those admirable and excellent missionaries of the Propagation Society, who alas! are too few for the labour which requires them. This gentleman it was who took the weary spirit in hand, nursed it with the divine nurture of Gospel teaching, and poured the balm of CHRIST'S love into the seared and wounded heart. The time had at length come when Edgar was no more to repine, when he was to acknowledge in all sincerity, "that it was good for him to have been afflicted," and that his state now, with all his lost fortunes, and somewhat doubtful prospects, was productive of more peace and contentment to himself than all the bright future which his talents, family influence, and ambition had laid open to him five years before. And so he set calmly to work to look upon the future, and after much talk with his new friend, he determined on returning to England, to find out at once what it was that had so completely cut him off from the family, that with the exception of his father, who wrote to him about once a quarter, not another soul showed themselves aware of his existence. One great reason for this step we must not forget to mention was the death of his mother, and his consequent succession to an income of £180 per annum, which had happened a year previously, and which in some sort made him an independent man.

And thus it was, that Mrs. Stackpoole in her husband's suburban box at Fulham was one morn-

ing in June informed of Edgar's arrival in England, and of his bodily descent in person upon the paternal mansion in Russell Square, about the hour, when she was ordinarily engaged in quarrelling with the cook upon her shortcomings in respect to last night's dinner.

Her perturbation at the news was considerable : for her father was well-nigh alone. Lucy, who since her husband's death, was at the head of his household, was with her elder sister Mary at Brighton. She must get up to town at once, and do anything to counteract the interest which the returned prodigal might awaken ; and indeed she might well be alarmed, for there was another influence in Russell Square which, though hitherto motionless, might exert itself at any moment, and prove exceedingly troublesome.

Pretty gentle Eva, just twenty, was in the zenith of her beauty ; and though as long as her father's mind was subject to every wind, fair or foul, which happened to blow, she could not be said to reign paramount in the house ; yet if she was to exert herself, it would be hard to say that she would not carry her point. But hitherto she never had exerted any influence she might have possessed. Her sisters detested her because she would marry, they feared, better than they had done. In truth, they led her the life of a dog. Not an admirer approached, not a marriageable man uttered a word of approval of her in their presence, that they did not poison old Markham's mind with the most mendacious stories respecting his character and conduct, and sometimes hers in regard to him. But Eva, though she suffered most bitterly for all this, as her admirers might fairly be named legion, never complained ; and in this too she caused offence. Had she had a battle royal with any one of her sisters when

these matters occurred, they would probably have given in sooner or later. But her quiet reproachful look, accompanied now and then with just the slightest approach to a curl of the lip denoting contempt, made them wild.

On such occasions they dilated on the badness of her heart, the wickedness of her mind, &c. &c.; and prophesied, sooner or later, that she would disgrace her family. And yet Eva let no outward sign show how wretched she was. The two brothers nearest her own age, younger than Edgar, were both in India, one in each branch of the Company's service, so that she had no one to defend her. Lucy was no companion to her, for she was maundering from morning till night about her lot as a widow. The schoolfellows, who longed to make their companion at school the friend of their riper years, Mrs. Stackpoole drove away, so that Eva's life was indeed a sad one. And just before Edgar's arrival from Australia, a young man of excellent family, to whom she was really attached, had been driven out of the house by old Markham, simply on the representations of this excellent lady; and Eva's heart was fairly bereft of every hope of comfort. It was at these times, that Eva often thought of Edgar, and more lately, when she least expected to see him.

When she last beheld him she had not attained the age of fourteen, and often since that time when she heard him reviled and abused, which she did at the hands of Letitia until her blood ran cold, then would she try to recall his bold, impetuous spirit, his generous sympathy for all their little troubles; that old sweet smile, now so dear, for it was the smile of her mother too, then so lately taken from her. All the tale of his iniquities fell dead upon her ear. She could only remember him as the one who used to make her sit next him at dessert, while he plied her on the sly with the things she liked

best; the one who always got her a place in the private box at the play, when Mary wanted it reserved for one of her friends; the one who went partners with her at the round game on festive evenings, and swindled others to make her rich in fish; the one who got her out of her sisters' hands into the best school in the kingdom, where she afterwards became the idol of that little world; the one, in fine, who had once or twice boxed her ears when she behaved ill—she loved his memory even for that. And now when she considered how deserted he was and an exile too, and when her own sad thoughts told her that the green spot on her own heart was getting smaller and smaller, and would soon be dried up altogether, she would cry in her own quiet way, and yet patiently, and think of whether they should ever meet again. Often and often would she have written to him, but Letitia had prepared her father for that, and she never was able to manage it. So on this morning in June, when she was called by her father into the dining-room, and told that Edgar was come back, and there he was, she threw herself into the young man's arms in a fit of crying, that fairly disconcerted the old man, who, accustomed only to her usual impassive manner, was quite unprepared for such a burst of feeling. Edgar certainly presented a rather peculiar appearance on this particular occasion. He had a large beard and a large moustache, his hair was long and untrimmed, and his face as brown as the mahogany dining-table; moreover, his coat was of a very colonial cut, and he seemed to have eschewed gloves. But Eva saw only the same blue eyes, and the same fascinating smile, and when he clasped her to his heart, and his eyes filled too with tears at the welcome he received, she was happy,—he was the same dear old Edgar of her childhood. "He must not go, if

papa ever wished to grant her a favour,—it was that he might stay with her now ;” and the old man looked pleased,—perhaps to think that now, that his race was so nearly run, he could leave his son with one friend at least, among the lot. And he gave his consent ; whereupon, it being just ten o’clock in the morning, Eva ran upstairs to see that her brother’s bed-room was got ready for him to sleep in fourteen hours afterwards. And he showed his gratitude by keeping it for three days. Perhaps his voyage, perhaps the shock of seeing his father, and home again, and the last few lines his mother had traced for him before she died ; perhaps all these things laid him up for that period during which the doctor ordered that he should not be disturbed, and during which Eva alone had access to him, and nursed him to her heart’s content. And during this time too, these young hearts became revealed to each other, and Edgar thought with shame on his own sorrows, when he heard those of that young, trusting, loving girl. But Eva was happy. If Edgar would only take her with him, she should soon be quite well. Of course Edgar would, if her father consented. And her father did consent, on Lucy’s persuasion, who wanted to get rid of her, though sorely to the anger of Mary and Letitia, who foresaw their own exposure from this alliance. And so it turned out. At a meeting of the family to greet their brother on his return, all these matters duly appeared in their true light. It was the sisters’ fault, for Edgar knew the whole ; but he had learnt the lessons of misfortune, and he had determined to upbraid no one, and to treat these subjects, as those of a sealed up book. Letitia, however, would gratify her spleen by slandering Eva to his face ; and so he quietly undid a packet which his dead mother had left in Eva’s hands for him, which

clearly demonstrated to them that they and their respected husbands, and even their brother Robert, had been systematically slandering him to his father, and to all his former friends, for the space of five years and more.

Edgar's first movement on recovering his strength was to Cambridge, whither he was accompanied by Eva, who considered him now as her exclusive property. There he had a true friend in his former college tutor, and to him he had resolved to make a clean breast of his whole fortunes, thoughts, and feelings, and by whose advice he intended to be guided as to his future career. Never was there taken a more politic step. It was owing to the interest he excited in this quarter, together with the knowledge of his real integrity and great abilities, that thirteen months later he took orders and obtained a curacy at Morlington; and it was the due sequel to the same event, that in two years and a half afterwards we find him in the place of the Reverend Thompson Beaumont, in the parish of Holycross. But previous to either of these events, we have to record the death of old Robert Markham, which took place only six months subsequently to his son's return. Edgar and Eva were both present, but the disagreements that followed between all members of the family were so displeasing to them, that they were glad indeed to leave London again behind them. From that time to the day when Robert Markham the younger was seen by Jeremiah Bate at Holycross, no communication had passed between Edgar and Eva and the others. They were not on bad terms, they were rather on no terms at all; and the first intelligence that Robert ever had of his brother's being in orders, was on this very occasion.

After Robert's return to London, he broke the fact to Mary and Letitia in turn. The former, on

whom the conviction of her brother's iniquity had now become fixed from long habit, said, "And you, Robert—don't contradict me, for I know it—you won't write to his Bishop."

"Well, really, Molly, I don't see that it is any business of mine."

"No business of your's that God's Word should be polluted! but I forgot; you do *not* make religion any business of yours," said the lady with a sneer. "But as the head of the family, I *presume* that you do not wish us all to be made a laughing-stock of."

"Well, certainly not," said Robert, rather bewildered; "but I don't see who is to know any thing about it. I only know, neither you nor I have been aware of it, though he has been a parson these three years; and yet it must have been in the papers."

"Of course it must, and everybody must have known it: that accounts for the way I was treated the other night at the Emersons'. I knew it would come out, though you laughed at me when I said so."

But if Robert was puzzled by his elder sister's conduct, Mrs. Stackpoole's must have beat his comprehension quite out of its level. This dear girl had for a considerable time been revolving in conjunction with her husband, what course they should pursue, in case Edgar should turn up in some sort of employment as a credit to the family, which she half thought might be the case. "And you know, Horace," she said, "he is not a sort of person to go to sleep at any time."

"Quite right, Letty, my love," said her husband. "Edgar has got more life in him than the whole of your mischievous family put together. I saw when he got back to England, that he had broken the back of his difficulties. Oh! he'll turn up before long, and in a good place too."

"Well, my dear, we ought in that case to be prepared what to do."

"I'll tell you what, Letty; we ought to have stuck by him before. Robert's wife seems determined not to give him a chick of any sort, and Edgar is the next in the entail. We must be sorry for our errors, my dear."

"Leave it to me," said Letty, who delighted in being a humbug; and so, when Robert one day appeared with the news of Edgar's new position in life, that he was a Clergyman much respected, with the influential Lord Tramontane for one patron, and Colonel Wreford, the member for Gramford, for another, he was certainly quite unprepared for the burst of delight, with which Letty hailed her brother Edgar's prosperity, nor for the genuine feeling with which she lamented her former treatment of him, and the expression of which she begged Robert forthwith to transmit to Holycross.

But she had to exercise her patience for a little. Neither her contrition so forwarded as she wished, nor Robert's desire for a reconciliation expressed with sincerity after Eva's funeral, had the effect which they looked for. To the latter, Edgar said that he had long forgotten all grounds of difference between them, and nothing would please him more, than some day to draw closer the ties between himself and his brothers; and as for his sisters, he forgave from his heart all the great wrong they had done *him*, but it must be also remembered, that they had grievously wronged Eva as well, and that with the remembrance of all her sufferings, of her decline and early death, which was brought on from one source,—Robert knew too well what *that one bitter disappointment was*; from all this he repeated, and from her never-to-be-forgotten devotion to him during four years of happiness, he could not out of respect to her memory just at

present go to enjoy himself with them when her ashes were hardly cold.

This *résumé* of the facts of Edgar's early life are necessarily short and incomplete, for my space is limited, and I have already stretched my story farther than I intended; but it will be sufficient to account for the doubts, which arose in Edgar's mind after his first interview with Ethel, as to the propriety of his applying in form for her hand, before his relations with his family were placed in a better position. And so, as we have seen, he started for Boxholme.

Ethel and Pansy read and re-read his note, and the two honoured him to the full for the course he was pursuing. Both of them knew well, that there had been dire disagreements between Eva, himself and others, but they knew no more. Ethel was convinced of one thing, that for her sake he was going to make some sacrifice, and she loved and loved his image in the shrine of her young heart more and more.



CHAPTER XVIII.

SCRUPLES AND WARNINGS.

EDGAR's success at Boxholme, in the object of his visit, was mainly owing to two circumstances: to the fact of his brother being out when he arrived, thereby enabling him to get round his sister-in-law, whom he had hitherto never seen, after his own fashion; and also to the fact, that that lady was only too glad to take up anybody, whom she believed her husband's sisters disliked. The truth is, Mrs. Markham thought she had been taken in in her marriage; though nobody particular in the matter of family herself, she married under the impression, that she was making thereby a great county connexion, whereas we know, that her husband was but an interloper in the county; what he might have become had he had abilities,—had he been agreeable,—a member of the hunt,—or of any respectable occupation at all, there is no knowing; but at present he was certainly nobody, and though one may think that Mrs. Markham might have been contented with Boxholme and four thousand a year, considering what she brought on her own side, it is certain, that she was not, and that she affected to look down on those city people, as she called Mary and Letitia, who in their turn gave themselves no small airs in respect to her.

Edgar's arrival fairly took this worthy lady by

storm; she had no idea that there was anything half so good in the whole family, for both Edgar and Eva had been fabulous personages to her in everything, except that hearsay had clothed them with none of the perfections which generally attach to such folk. The gentleman on his side had had some inkling of her weak points, and succeeded in no short time in completely turning her not remarkably strong head. Robert's arrival from town by the late train found his brother quite established in the place, and an equally felicitous evening concluded so felicitous a day.

Edgar remained with his brother a week, during which time he raised the reputation of the family amazingly by a sermon he preached at the village church, to the no small delight of Mrs. Markham, who trotted him about the neighbourhood as *her* brother-in-law, and as if he was not the smallest connection of her husband's, though it was not easy to see, how she could separate the two degrees of relationship. During this time also a reconciliation took place between Edgar and Letitia, at least so far as a proceeding can be so called, which consists of quiet disapproval on one side, and crocodile repentance on the other. Mary did not come round quite, but she thawed somewhat; and the visit more than answered the purpose required in it, namely, that his brothers and sisters should look with approval on his probable marriage with a young lady of excellent family and twenty thousand pounds.

Meanwhile what were Ethel and Pansy about? Talking of Edgar a good deal, you may be sure. On one point the latter had expressed her opinion very decisively, and that was, that Ethel ought to tell her aunt at once; but in this respect Ethel could not be brought to agree with her. "It was Edgar's secret," she said, "quite as much as hers ;

he would never do wrong himself, and if he had wished it, he would have written to say so. They knew very well, that difficulties existed between himself and his family, and for her sake he had gone to remove them. If the engagement was made known, before these difficulties were removed, they might form a ground for the most serious opposition on her uncle's part; only let her speak to him for a few moments first, was all she asked. She hated secrecy as much as Pansy, but so little had taken place already, that she had no right to mention it without consulting him."

Pansy thought the little that had taken place, (for Ethel had told her all about the scene after Coleman's death,) was quite enough in its way, and she still adhered to her own opinion. Ethel had always been treated so openly, had all her life been allowed liberty in action and speech, such as is seldom allowed to young girls of her beauty and prospects; had, in short, had such unbounded confidence reposed in her, that it was not due to her own spotless character, for her to have a thought on this subject secret from her uncle and aunt. Pansy was a downright little thing in her way, and on next Wednesday night she resolved to tell Mr. Edgar a piece of her mind on this subject, when she met him after church. But Edgar disappointed her by not returning on that day; and the only answer that Pansy could get from the Gramford gentleman who officiated for him was, that he would take the duty on Friday, (it being Lent,) and on Sunday as well, if he did not receive instructions from Mr. Markham to the contrary. This state of things made the two girls rather fidgety; there was to be on the ensuing night one of those Drellington tea parties, of which we have given a specimen, at Miss Piminy's. Aunt Wreford was not going, and Ethel, who clung fondly to the hope, that she was

to see her lover there that night, was quite cast down at this intelligence. However Pansy was a splendid little comforter, and did all she could to raise her spirits; and Ethel did not give up all hope, but dressed herself as she thought would most please him, and would make her most attractive in his eyes, from whom she once had learned to seek only the adorning of a meek and quiet spirit, that she might have praise of God.

Meanwhile Edgar, flushed with victory, and in excellent spirits, was on his journey towards home, where he arrived about eight at night, to find Miss Piminy's urgent note for her party that evening. He was rather tired, but he did not like to disappoint the little old maid,—she was not the best *ton* in the place, and that was the reason, he thought, why he ought to make no distinction with regard to her, as he had been to the same class of entertainments at the houses of others; still it would be late,—however he ought to go. I wonder if it entered his head that it was just possible that he might see Ethel. Perhaps it did; but let us hope that that was a secondary consideration.—He had to dress, and he passed some time at Eva's grave. He was thinking whether all he had done during the past week would meet the approbation of her gentle spirit. He was not distrustful on the point, for he knew how forgiving of all injury she was, and what humiliation would she not have suffered to have made him happy.—Her boy, but lately so miserable, was about to be consoled!

But all this took up time;—and it was half-past nine when he got to Drellington; so that the weak tea,—the trotting up to the piano,—the dreary conversations between separate knots of the company,—indeed the exciting part of the entertainment was nearly all over; Miss Piminy had bewailed his absence by the half hour together in a

manner that could not be very gratifying to the rest of the company, and Miss Jemima had talked of it with much concern, particularly to Pansy and Ethel, as if it was of greater moment to them than to the others. The latter had quite given him up, and it required no small art on Pansy's part to prevent her showing her disappointment—when of a sudden Ethel felt he was in the room. She did not hear him, and the place where he was actually standing was hidden from her gaze by some inequality in the apartment, but she felt he was there, and in a moment more she heard and saw him making his excuses to the hostess. In an instant her whole soul was in her face; her eyes, mouth, neck, all flushed up with delight, and Pansy with great presence of mind seized a large book of prints, which she placed before her in such a way as to hide her from the observation of the rest, while in a whisper she implored her to control herself, for Jane Turnbull's eyes were upon her, with a very curious expression in them.

Edgar's rapid comprehensive glance took in all this in a moment, and while saying commonplace nothings to every one, as they came round him he was really wondering what Jane's look meant. "Why, surely," he said to himself, "it can't have come out already; and yet that girl knows it.—Oh! come, she must not look at Ethel in that way." So he at once made his way to Jane's side, and began asking about her mother, whom he did not see, and then about herself too, with such an air of interest, that the rest of the party exchanged looks of amusement, while it was now Jane's turn to blush. The plan succeeded,—Ethel had time to recover herself, and when he spoke to her it was in reference to some music, which he had brought for Miss Miller, from town, and as some of the words were in Italian, she must be good enough to

explain them to her, and teach her how to pronounce them.

"Well, now, where have you been, you good-for-nothing man?" said Miss Jemima, who thought, that to speak in this way was rather killing. "You look so well, and so full of spirits. Have you been to see your lady love?"

"*You* must know better than that, Miss Jemima," he said, demurely.

"I know! No; I am not in the secret;" and she looked significantly at Jane, who was covered with confusion, at what had passed.

"But do tell me, where have you been?"

"I have been to see my brother."

"In town?"

"No! in Buckinghamshire."

"But I thought you were not on good terms with your brother."

"Pray who told you that?" said Edgar, displeased.

"Oh! I don't know; people will talk," she replied.

"Well, then, as they seem to talk to you on these subjects, just tell them that we have made it up again," said he, laughing. "It may give them a little more occupation;" and he glanced at Ethel, who had lost not a word of all this.

"Did you see Colonel Wreford as you passed through London?" said Jane, when he was again near her.

"No!" he replied, with perfect coolness, though he understood the full meaning of her speech. "He is coming to Drellington very shortly, and that will be quite time enough for me."

"Indeed," she said; "I am surprised at that."

"Have you any meaning in your words?" remarked he, rather abruptly; "because if so, you had better speak it out."

"No!" she said, in a great fright, for she was terribly afraid of him. "Pray don't think so."

"That is all right," he said, with a good-humoured smile; and he passed on.

It is needless to say that he could have no conversation with Ethel that night; but, when there was a move made to depart, and some of the ladies were up stairs cloaking, Pansy found time to get him into a corner, and the following dialogue ensued between them.

"Do I take a liberty in talking to you on your own secrets, Mr. Markham?" she said.

"Not if you are in possession of any of them," he replied.

"I am in possession of one of them: it relates to Ethel."

"Well, speak on."

"I think, Mr. Markham, it is very wrong, your keeping this business a secret,—a wrong to yourself, and a wrong to her."

Edgar winced. "Miss Miller, you must first of all remember that I have but three hours ago returned from a journey, upon the success of which alone depended my happiness. Had I seen Colonel or Mrs. Wreford before I went, it would have probably endangered every chance of it."

"Then you should have made it before you spoke to Ethel."

"You do not know of what you are speaking: if you did, you are the last person who would have had me to do so."

"That may be," said Pansy, feeling she was not very strong on that point; "still, there ought to be no secrecy. Will you let her tell Mrs. Wreford to-night?"

"I will not prevent her," he said, with a sigh; "but I wish she would let me see her first. It may be some days yet, because it is Lent, and this

next week I shall be busy ; but I will not let any opportunity slip of doing so. You cannot know all, Miss Miller ; at present, literally nothing has passed between us. I do not know what her wishes may be, and she knows none of mine. I suppose we are engaged, but she has not even had time to tell me that."

"Oh, you men!" said Pansy. "You only want her to say that she loves you. Will not my word be sufficient?"

"I don't know," said he, avoiding the question, "but I want to tell her that *I* love *her*, and I would prefer making that communication myself. Indeed, Miss Miller," he continued, after a pause, "this matter involves no question of wrong. All these things depend on the peculiar circumstances attending them. There are fifty things I want to tell her, and to know from her ; to hear what she wishes, and what course of conduct she will consent to pursue in case of difficulties. Matters of this kind ought all to be carefully considered by those who look for success in the result. I promise you no time shall be lost, though accident may not favour a speedy meeting. I am quite as much against delay as you can be."

"Tell me," she said, "was your journey propitious?"

"None could have been more so," he replied.

Ethel drew near, and heard these words.

"But Miss Miller, you are not alone in these secrets," he said ; "Jane Turnbull is in full possession of them as well."

"How can that be?" said Pansy.

"I can't tell," he returned ; "but it is so : therefore, if the information spreads, we shall know where it comes from."

The return of many of the company closed this short dialogue. Edgar put the two girls into their

carriage, and was just able, as *she* passed him, to whisper the word "Ethel." She did not answer; but a slight pressure on his arm, and a look full in his face were enough. How he dreamed of her look that night!

It is as well, perhaps, at this juncture, to explain the mystery respecting Jane Turnbull, because, as Edgar said, she *was* in possession of the secret, though nobody could divine how she had managed to be so. It never entered Edgar's head, that on the night when he and Ethel were standing next the Hermitage gate, on the piece of waste land which I mentioned, the inmates of the Vicarage might have been enjoying the moonlight also from their bedroom windows, if they had felt disposed to do so. However, as a body, they were not inclined that way; but Jane, having a headache, was retiring early, and was on the point of closing the window, when in the field beneath she saw two figures slowly proceeding towards Mrs. Wilford's, and it was not very difficult to say to whom they belonged. There was nothing remarkable in their being together, for Jane had heard all about Coleman, and that the Curate was expected to be in attendance at her bedside; but still she continued to gaze on them, until their demeanour became more and more significant, and could in no way be traced to Coleman, or any other common cause. Of course, Jane heard nothing; but she was not the less interested, for all that. Ethel's beautiful figure, and her hand and face raised up to heaven, and then Edgar's sudden movement to her side. And now they are gone. Jane has forgotten her headache, but is in a fever of jealousy and indignation instead. Her first impulse was to go down and tell every one, but she would not, perhaps, be believed. No! she would watch, and if Ethel kept it a secret, so as to compromise herself—oh, did not

she gloat over that idea! St. Ethel, indeed, so good, and so pure!

And she did wait, and said nothing until this night; the occurrences of which we have just related. Edgar's sudden journey, too, wounded her. She would wait till he returned from that, and see how she could hurt him. And then her heart smote her, and she thought how she could have loved him herself!

Jane was not insensible to good impulses, though she had been badly brought up. She could hardly make up her mind to injure him, for he had been very kind to her; he had saved her from her brother's scoffs, when they had most pained her, and he had made her pass pleasanter hours by his company and conversation than she had ever known in her life; and so she put off doing anything not only till after this night, but till over the ensuing Sunday, when nearly a fortnight had elapsed since the scene which she had witnessed.

On the following Monday, however, two days before the fortnight would have been completed, it having been casually mentioned that Colonel Wrexford was expected at Newlands for a few days on the ensuing Saturday, she began to fear lest her prey, Ethel's reputation, should slip through her fingers. The probability was, that Edgar would then claim Ethel's hand in due form; and if intervening difficulties were overcome,—and she saw no reason to suppose that they would not be,—all her information respecting the moonlight meeting would be worthless, or at least only useful as a romantic addition to the love tale which all Drelington would then be approving.

And so, on the morning of that day, in the presence of her father and mother, did Jane, with many tears,—bemoaning that her sense of duty obliged her to do that which was repulsive to her feelings of charity to her fellow creatures,—narrate the cir-

cumstances with which the reader is far better acquainted than she was, and which, whatever effect it had on her mother, fairly struck her male parent all of a heap.

"Well, I thought it would be so," said Mrs. Turnbull, after a pause, "though it has been longer coming about than some of us looked for. I hope they will be happy, that I do."

"But, mamma," said Jane, in astonishment, "have you no words of horror for Ethel's conduct? She, so trusted, so pure, as every one thought her, to be so intimate with a gentleman in an open field, and without even an acknowledged engagement to cover the indelicacy."

"Shocking, shocking!" grunted the Vicar, evidently ruminating on what course he should take.

"Jane, we have no right to judge harshly of the conduct of others, particularly when those others are two who have the highest title to our respect and esteem," said her mother. "All this is capable of explanation: if their engagement was an acknowledged one, you would think nothing of the indelicacy, for they were not aware they were observed. Much as I may regret this secresy,—although Mrs. Wreford may be cognizant of it, for all we know,—yet I cannot see that we have any right to judge it, much less to interfere respecting it."

"Oh, mamma, forgive me if I differ with you," said her daughter. "You and I may have no right to interfere, though my conscience will not even allow that; but the Clergyman of the parish, he has the right; it is a duty incumbent on him."

"Certainly, certainly," chimed in the Vicar, with another grunt, and shaking his fat cheeks, "I must notice this. I should be undeserving of my trust, if I neglected to notice this."

Now nobody must suppose for an instant that the Vicar had any conscientious scruples on the

subject. He was only actuated by a desire to keep well in with the Wrefords, and by the dread of their showing him the cold shoulder, (and he hated cold shoulders of all sorts, both at dinner and elsewhere,) if it came out that he knew as much as he did. For the ultimate happiness of any human being in the village, after his own comforts, he cared not one straw.

"Well, I do think it is very disgraceful, if you do," said Mrs. Turnbull, rising to depart; "and I think also, that if anything untoward to the fortunes of these two loving young people comes of it, we all richly deserve to be punished. George would not think as you do, and he has far more reason to dislike such a match."

But the Vicar had made up his mind, and having enjoined the strictest secrecy respecting the matter to every one else, strode off to Newlands at about two in the day, being first duly fortified by a substantial luncheon for the meritorious duty he had in hand.

Poor Mrs. Wreford, as might have been expected, felt the news very acutely. She mourned more over what she considered dereliction of duty and decorum on Ethel's part, than over the end of the hopes which she and her husband had in view for her. However, as Ethel had adopted a clandestine course on her side, she could not expect that her aunt would act openly on her's; and whatever was done should be done, therefore, without her wishes being consulted. But at Edgar's behaviour her indignation knew no bounds. After all the benefits he had received at all their hands,—after he had been welcomed as one of the family day after day to the house,—that he should gain this young girl's affections in such a way, and carry on the matter as if it was a common intrigue! It was too bad! She thanked the Vicar for the ser-

vice he had rendered, and having enjoined secrecy upon him, she set to work to write to her husband, and then kept her room for the rest of the day, under the plea of a headache, to avoid seeing her niece until her own equanimity was somewhat restored.

The Colonel brought himself down from town the ensuing afternoon, and forthwith a debate on the serious aspect of affairs ensued between them. The gentleman was in good spirits, and would not think things so bad as his wife considered them. The moonlight story might be all moonshine after all; Jane Turnbull hated Ethel, and it was notorious that she wanted to catch Markham herself no long time back; so that seeing two people in Broad Field, she lately made up the story, and placed it on the night of Coleman's death to make it credible. How was it that she had not mentioned it before? Mrs. Wreford had never thought of that, to be sure. As for Ethel's indelicacy, and Markham's underhand conduct, the Colonel laughed at it; even if the whole story were true. "Depend upon it," he said, "they had a good reason for that, which will all come out some day. There are some circumstances in '*affaires de cœur*,' which baffle every one of the rules that prim old grandmamas have laid down. I don't think, Georgiana, my dear, that our lovemaking was quite free from criticism, eh!" and the two laughed good-humouredly at the remembrance of those old days. Notwithstanding all this, the Colonel quite acknowledged that they must be cautious, as he had not the smallest intention of sacrificing his beautiful niece to a country parson. If he could only once get her up to London, the game was in his own hands; he would take care then that Markham should not get hold of her, and this could only be done by *finesse*:—if Ethel was once thwarted, she'd go off in a twin-

klings. Truly the Colonel understood what he was at.

Ethel welcomed her uncle with the most undisguised pleasure, for she thought that matters would soon be set right now. The Colonel told her, that her society had quite spoilt him for London,—that he had no business to leave it, but as he must be in Gramford on Monday next, he had taken a week's holiday to be with her again. "And Ethel looked so handsome," he said, "and so well. Poor Lady Nelthorpe was really very ill; perhaps she had not heard that. Would she come back with him, and see her? Some one ought to go, and Angelica was too young. If Ethel would come back with him next week, she might name her own day." Ethel did not know, but she thought that by that time it would be all settled by Edgar, and she did not like to offend her uncle just now, at all events, so she said "she would if he wished it." "That was a dear girl;—Tuesday or Wednesday?" "Wednesday would suit her best, so Wednesday it should be, that is, to-morrow week." And the Colonel said to himself, "it is all moonshine—Jane's story"—and his wife began to think so too.

But though Colonel Wreford was of this opinion at auspicious moments like the present, his mind misgave him at other times. With his acuteness set on the keenest edge by the circumstances which had brought him from town six days before he had intended, he was only too ready to note the smallest symptom of danger offered by Ethel's demeanour; and he could not help remarking, that at times she was what the French call *préoccupée*, talking on subjects to which she was not attending and working or drawing mechanically with her thoughts on something else. On these occasions he would say to himself, "It was just as well that I came down; we shall set it right next week."

Indeed the Colonel's usual luck attended him. Pansy had caught a bad cold on the previous Sunday, and could not go to Holycross for the Wednesday evening's service, so that Edgar on that occasion was not made acquainted by her with the fact of his return. She sent a note, however, which the Colonel put into the fire: and when on Sunday she expressed her surprise at Edgar's behaviour in no measured terms, the poor Curate was perfectly astonished at the appearance which his love affairs had assumed.

"The Colonel back, and Ethel going on Wednesday! Why, Miss Miller, you have been playing hide and seek with me all this time," said he.

"Don't call me Miss Miller," said Pansy, in a huff; "but just rouse yourself, or Ethel will never be your wife."

"If Ethel is true to herself, it will take more than Colonel Wreford can do to prevent *that*, Pansy," he replied, with a smile; "but you are quite right, there is no time to be lost. Do you think he will be in Drellington church to-night?"

"I am sure he will not. From his intercepting my note last week, I suspect he does not wish you to know that he is here; for it only contained my excuse and that announcement."

"That is it—is it, my dear Colonel?" said Edgar, musing. "Well, I have done no wrong, and have no reason to fear. Don't be alarmed, Pansy; give my dear love to Ethel, and tell her, that I will see her uncle before he is aware that I know of his arrival."

Neither the Colonel, nor Ethel, nor any of the Newlands party were at church that night; and what is more, the Vicar did not behave over civilly to Edgar either,—pretended he did not expect him, and wondered what he was doing when he put on a surplice as usual for the part of the service

preceding that in which he had to officiate. But Edgar cared little for that; he had long held the Vicar at his just value: and though somewhat hurt at first, soon ceased to think about it. He preached as usual, and was debating in the churchyard within himself whether he should go to Newlands, when one of the schoolboys touched him and delivered a short note, in Mrs. Turnbull's handwriting.

"Dear Mr. Markham," it ran, "do not go to Newlands to-night, but call upon me to-morrow morning at eleven. My girls will be out, and the Vicar has to attend the Board of Guardians. I wish to speak to you alone. Be sure to come, as it affects your happiness.

"MARY TURNBULL.

"Sunday afternoon."

Of course Edgar went, and was very angry with himself for ever having judged this old lady harshly, when he saw the genuine feeling with which she welcomed him.

"I am so glad you are come," she said; "they have been playing with your reputation for a fortnight past, and I am determined, for my dear George's sake, to be your friend."

He expressed his acknowledgments as well as he did everything, and urged her to explain herself.

"Mr. Markham, you must excuse me if I do speak plain, it is for your own sake that I do so. You are engaged to Miss Conway."

Edgar acknowledged the soft impeachment; and asked, how she knew that?

"You were both seen the night of Coleman's death in Broad Field, and close to the Hermitage. Will that account for my information?"

"It will account for everything," said Edgar;

and in a moment he saw how Jane had become acquainted with all she knew.

"What passed then," continued Mrs. Turnbull, "has been repeated; and in consequence of it Colonel Wreford came down last week. He is a clever man, Mr. Markham, and he intends to carry his niece to London on Wednesday. You have no time to lose."

Edgar saw that too; he would call on him immediately. He would go to Newlands at once.

"You must be quick, then," she replied, "for he is to attend a meeting at Gramford this morning, which will occupy him all day; and if he got an inkling of your intentions, I really think he would carry off his niece at dead of night."

"Let us hope better things," said Edgar, trustfully. "I will call on him at once. If he is absent I will see his wife. They cannot constrain Ethel, and if ever girl was true, she is. God bless you, Mrs. Turnbull,—I have not overcome so many troubles to be unsuccessful in this."

And he was gone.

But he was not to see the Colonel this day. Just as he came in sight of the Lodge gate, that gallant officer, accompanied by his wife, passed out of it on his way to Gramford in an open carriage. Edgar's heart bounded with delight, and he pulled Sugarplum upon his haunches in a manner that must have rather surprised that sagacious animal.—He would see Ethel now; tell her now of his love, hear her avowal in return, arrange with her all his plans. "Turn round, Sugarplum, my boy, a stable at the Rose for you." Your master is not such a fool as to pass the Lodge gates; orders might have been left there to deny him admittance. Though a longer journey, he would go round, and take the well known road through the park on foot. Beat on, young heart, these times come but once in a life.



CHAPTER XIX.

EDGAR AND ETHEL.

LEGGATT, the Colonel's confidential servant, answered the door. Leggatt was a great admirer of Edgar. He was a most orthodox servant, attending service, when with his master in town, at S. Barnabas', and holding Drellington Church, Vicar, churchwardens, and their concomitants very cheap indeed.

"Good morning, Mr. Markham," he said; "it really do me good to see you again. I 'most began to think you had forgot us."

"It would take a great deal to make me forget you, Leggatt," said Markham; "but I had no idea that you were down here. Is the Colonel in?"

"No, sir: both he and missus are gone to Gramford," said Leggatt; "but the young ladies is in. Walk in the drawing-room, sir."

"I ought not to stay a moment," said Edgar; "for it is Lent, and I am very busy. Just tell Miss Conway I should like to say a few words to her; I won't detain her long: and be quick about it, there's a good man."

Leggatt was off at once.

And now Edgar experienced that aching, fluttering at the heart, which some of us have experienced when we have been close to happiness, and have half feared that it may yet be held distant

from us. Standing in Newlands drawing-room, after poking the fire, and nervously fidgeting at every movement in the house which fell on his ear, he took up a pretty book of annuals on the table, and was getting interested in some of the charming engravings with which such things now-a-days abound, when Ethel entered the room: She did so noiselessly, and stood beside him without his perceiving it: of course looking most beautiful, her silken hair drooping from her forehead in one regular slant behind her head, where it had been caught up in cords and bound with braid; the full, purple eye resting on him with a fond delight that she was surprising him; the figure, as usual, erect, as if proud of its beauty; all, as it were, saying, "Edgar, here I am—here—yours."

He turned, and caught her to his heart. "Ethel, *ma bien aimée*, at last, at last!"

There are moments on this earth too, when happiness prevents our speaking,—when the very breath seems suspended by the action of the joy. What wonder if they were both silent for many minutes?—what wonder if she looked on him with her whole heart, and he gazed in her eyes with delight. "Ethel, *ma bien aimée*." How pleasant, and yet how sad do those moments seem to us who tell of them.

I will not give the conversation which followed between them; it is best not to linger over the details of earthly passion; joyful though they be to the actors, we who write and read ought not to dwell too long on what on this earth if tasted should only be so in moderation. It is enough to say that they gave themselves up for the time to the fascination of each other's presence. They loved—they were together; and for the moment all was forgotten—time and eternity, heaven and hell,—all, save their present love and happiness.

At last a casual observation reminded them of the reason for which he was there, and of the necessity of proclaiming their engagement without delay. Upon that question there was no difference, but upon the time of doing so Ethel and Edgar were certainly at variance. She wished him to remain at Newlands until her uncle returned, and there is no doubt but that this was the most sensible course to have pursued; but, unfortunately for their mutual comfort, he had made an engagement to dine at Lord Tramontane's that evening, an engagement which he had contracted with a view to the future happiness of himself and Ethel. "If there was any objection on the Colonel's part," he said, "Lord Tramontane would remove it."

"But, Edgar, when will you see Uncle Wreford? Supposing he takes me away on Wednesday!"

"Well, Ethel, suppose he does! You must return as well as go—mine. I will see Uncle Wreford before you go."

"But when, Edgar?"

"You don't go till Wednesday morning," he replied; "this is Monday. I go to Auster Park to-night simply to get Lord Tramontane's advice about you and me, Ethel, you and me! I shall not be back at Holycross till late to-morrow evening; suppose I am here at eight on Wednesday morning. Your uncle is an early man in the country, but I shall see him before you start."

Ethel looked rather aghast at the cool way in which her lover talked of her departure; but she never took into consideration two facts: first, that he really believed the story of Lady Nelthorpe's illness; and secondly, that he never dreamed her uncle would have any objection to her choosing him for a husband, when the reasons of her choice were explained.

"Edgar," she said, "could not you speak to my uncle to-morrow?"

"Yes, I could; but late at night. The only reason why I object to that time is, that I am sure to be fagged; and I would sooner, Ethel, be in possession of all my faculties, in case Colonel Wreford advanced objections."

But Ethel drooped her head.

"Tell me, dear girl," he said, on seeing this, "tell me; I will do anything you wish. Express the breath of a thought, and I will catch it up."

"I only fancied," said Ethel, with a painful look at Edgar, "that if you spoke in time enough, I might not have to go at all."

Edgar seemed puzzled. "I must be very stupid," he said; "but with all my selfishness in love, I could not expect to keep you from your sick aunt, be I ever so happy."

Ethel blushed scarlet at this rebuke, but proceeded to set it right in an instant.

"Do you believe in the story of Lady Nelthorpe's illness?" she asked.

Edgar was silent, and for some moments looked very grave. At last he said,

"If Colonel Wreford resorts to falsehood, there is no knowing how this may end. I have half a mind to stay till he returns."

"No, don't do that," said Ethel, eagerly; "it will never do for *us* to lose Lord Tramontane's interest. But can you come to-morrow? I do not go till Wednesday; and, Edgar, perhaps I shall not go at all," and she put up her hand on his left shoulder, as she did that night at the Hermitage gate.

"Ethel, my queen, I will be here to-morrow evening at five at the latest; but I somehow am afraid, after what you have told me about Lady Nelthorpe—there! did you see that?"

Some one passed the windows, and must have seen the two together.

"Whoever it was, must have seen us, Edgar."

"If he or she did, Ethel, and if it comes to Colonel Wreford's ears, he will have you out of the county before I lay my head on a pillow to-night; that is, supposing him to have told the falsehood about Lady Nelthorpe's illness. A man who would do that would stick at nothing."

He spoke rather wildly, and Ethel looked alarmed; but perceiving this, he at once became calm.

"Ethel, promise me one thing."

"I will promise you anything," she replied.

"Promise me that, whatever happens, you will not leave Newlands before I have seen your uncle and you—both, remember, together."

"But I have promised already that I will go on Wednesday."

"But not on Tuesday. I feel sure," said Edgar, "he will try to get you away before I can call. Ethel, you must make me this promise. If I lose you now, what will become of me?"

She raised her face to his with such delight. She loved to see him anxious about her; that showed how fond he was of her. She put her hand in his.

"Edgar, I won't be lost; no, not for all they may try and do. I will stay here till you come, unless they make me run away."

He laughed at this. "Only promise me," he said, "that on no pretext whatever you will leave Drellington until I see your uncle."

"I promise," she said; and he was satisfied.

They had much to speak of besides all this. He told her of his early imprudence and early struggles,—of how they had benefited him, and how he considered them merely as the tempering

of the metal, which must be undergone by him before he could be fit for his priestly office ;—to tell her of Eva's history too, and how the sun of her young life came to set so soon : and Ethel's eyes filled with tears at this recital, and she acknowledged that Eva was better than her. *She* would have succumbed at once ; but Eva knew how to bear, and though nature's powers failed at last, Eva had bowed to the stroke meekly and humbly. And Ethel had to tell him of her mother, and the old house at Mervyn, of her childhood, of her quick appreciation of his character, and then (she hardly knew when it came) of her love.

And thus passed on two hours, when the nursery dinner-bell told them it was time to part. One "God bless you !" and he was gone, to return to-morrow and to claim her as his bride.

Pansy, when she saw her a few minutes later, hoped she was satisfied now, and asked her, at which particular stile she had made up her mind. But Ethel could not take the matter jokingly. She was in such a dream of happiness, that she could have passed the whole afternoon in silence with her thoughts ; but this was not to be. She must appear as usual before her uncle, for nothing was to be said on the subject till Edgar had seen him. She must appear the same as ever. So she tried to rally herself, and to chat to Pansy about their prospects and hers ; and how Pansy was to live with them, until they found a lover for her, which having got one herself, she was laudably desirous to find for her friend and sister. This exercise, however, did her good, and she had regained her accustomed serenity by the time her uncle and aunt returned home ; so that it was without any exertion or outward betrayal of emotion that she could address him with the words, "Please, uncle, Mr. Markham was here this morning just after you

started. He is very anxious to see you before you go, and I was to say that he would call on you to-morrow evening, about five o'clock."

The Colonel looked at her in some surprise, but could make nothing of the scrutiny; and, when they were alone, he said to his wife: "What do you make of this, Georgiana?"

"I really don't know what to think," said Mrs. Wreford. "Either she is a very deceitful girl, or we have been wrong all along."

"I suspect," said her husband, "that this moonlight story is but a mare's nest after all; and yet Turnbull seems to believe it. I wish Wednesday were here."

"Could not you start to-morrow?" asked his wife.

"I could, but it would very inconvenient; for I must pass the morning with Summers: the estate may be going to the dogs for all I know. Besides, if there is anything in it, Ethel would probably refuse to come; I gave her her own day."

"I am sure she would not refuse," replied Mrs. Wreford; "it is quite contrary to her disposition."

"Are you certain we know anything of her disposition at all?" said the Colonel. "A girl who can carry on such an affair in the way we suppose her to have done, may be quite prepared to show she has a will of her own, if driven to it."

"Oh! dear me! I am afraid something disagreeable will happen," said Mrs. Wreford in dismay. "Would it not be better to let her marry the man, if she wishes it?"

"Nonsense," said the husband; "the girl might marry a Duke, and I am not going to let her throw herself away upon a country parson, whom nobody knows anything about. The best plan will be to let matters go on just as if we suspected nothing. I will write a note to-morrow to Markham, making

an appointment for Wednesday at noon; and at the last moment I will be called away just two hours before, and you will have to regret extremely that I could not keep the appointment."

"Yes, but that will be extremely dishonest," said Mrs. Wreford.

"What would you have? These young people have been deceiving me for the last two months, and heaven knows for how much longer. Am I not to be allowed to foil them at their own weapons?"

"Well," said Mrs. Wreford with a sigh, "if you think so, I have no right to see objections. But I wish you were both gone."

"Oh, it will all come right, trust to me: only let me once get her to London, and if the parson catches a glimpse of her during the next three months I'll forfeit my seat."

And this course the Colonel decided on pursuing.

It is annoying to have to close a chapter so full of agreeable matter with anything in the least savouring of the reverse. But one circumstance remains to be told, which had a large influence on the line of conduct which the gallant Colonel thought himself afterwards compelled to adopt.

We have mentioned, that during the most interesting part of the interview between Ethel and Edgar, some one on the gravel-walk outside hastily passed the drawing-room windows. This some one was Angelica. Now Angelica was a very good little girl, especially devoted to her cousin Ethel, in whose future happiness she was as much interested as was any other person in the same family. But she had also been very well brought up, and was in an equal degree devoted to her parents; and, though she could have no objection to a union between Ethel and Edgar, the idea somehow seized possession of her mind, that what

she had seen between them in the rather hurried survey she took of the interior of the drawing-room, she ought to mention to her parents. But divided as she was between this sense of what was right, and her fear of injuring those who had never injured her, she found it very difficult to screw up her courage to the disagreeable revelation she would have to make. In the hopes of compounding the matter, she had waited till the evening with a sort of half belief that Ethel would reveal the whole thing herself to her uncle. But as this did not happen, and time passed on, her perplexity became extreme. She could not eat her fruit at dessert; she kept answering questions with monosyllables, changing colour when looked at, and doing everything in a very foolish and unintelligible manner. Her father thought she was ill, and made her go to bed early, so that no step was taken that night. But Angelica could not sleep; she lay awake, tossing till morning, and perplexed with scruples. Finally, she made up her mind, and communicated the whole matter to her father next morning at about nine o'clock, just before breakfast, after he had opened the letter bag and distributed his letters, and when he had made an announcement which he wished later he had withheld, viz., that there was no letter from Lady Nelthorpe.

He took his child's communication with great gravity, commended her conduct for telling him, but requested her to act as if nothing had happened, as there must be some mistake in the matter. Angelica did so, and much relieved took her place with the rest of the party at the breakfast table. What passed thereupon we must reserve for the ensuing chapter.



CHAPTER XX.

A STORM.

"BLESS me! how very unfortunate," said the Colonel, anxiously masticating, as the servant brought him a mysterious piece of paper, with a more mysterious whisper. "I shall have to go to town this very day! What shall I do? There is Summers to see, and Lacking, and Tomms, and each of them want a day." Then musing and contemplating the paper which purported (mendaciously) to be a telegraphic despatch: "It can't be helped; I must do it. Ethel, dear, I shall have to hurry your arrangements somewhat; we must be off this afternoon."

Ethel became a deadly pale; nevertheless, she managed to stammer out, "At what hour, do you think, uncle?"

The Colonel scrutinised her keenly from underneath his eyelashes, and said in his most affectionate tones, "I'll put it off to the latest moment I can afford, for the sake of your traps. Only! I must be in town at six." Ringing the bell. "Leggatt, tell Birkin to have a pair of posters to the light carriage at half-past two,—that will do for the 3.20 train."

Poor Ethel! This was so sudden for her, that she had not time to be frightened; not time to do

more than turn pale, and experience that quick shock over the system which makes one feel tired all at once, when there is nothing to cause fatigue. In the midst of a mechanical breakfast, she found herself acquiescing to everything which her uncle proposed, and before she could collect her thoughts, he had coolly walked off, perhaps not sorry to have arranged it so well.

It was high time however, to think of action, and so Ethel, released from the breakfast table, rushed at once to her own room.

This poor child's thoughts, (for child she was in experience) were most perplexing. She had never been accustomed to disobey, and as in other cases bad habits are difficult to throw off, so in her's she could not divest herself of the good one. Her uncle would have the carriage at the door at half-past two, and what should she do? He would say, "Come, Ethel," and she knew not how not to come when he said that. She had promised Edgar not to go, but if Uncle Wreford said, "Come, Ethel," what could she do but obey? As for her father's dying request; respecting her not being constrained, it never then entered her head for a moment. Her uncle would say "come," in his quiet way, and Edgar had made her promise not to—"come,"—that was it. So she thought, and thought, with her face buried in her hands, until it just entered her head that it must be nearly ten o'clock, and then seized with a sudden dread, that, if once taken away to London, she should never see him again, she jumped up, and was off to the library. She must tell Uncle Wreford at once, how things stood. It was disagreeable certainly, but it must be done.

The Colonel's arrangements had answered so perfectly the object he had in view when he planned them, that he had begun to flatter him-

self, that all danger of their miscarrying was now over. Ethel therefore, entering the room, with a colour which she hardly ever showed, and her large blue eyes gleaming with a sort of unnatural lustre, at once took away his presence of mind. Could he have kept his head, his point might have been carried. The moment he lost it, his chance of gaining his niece was at an end. But so it was to be : his temper acquired the mastery, and without for a second trying to govern it, he burst out,

"Why, Ethel, what is this? I am shocked and dismayed at your appearance."

"Please, uncle," said Ethel, in a hurried manner, and determined to get it out before her heart failed her, "I am very sorry, but I cannot go to town to-day, until you have seen Mr. Markham."

"Mr. Markham!" roared the Colonel, "what has he to do with it?"

"Please, uncle," continued Ethel, in the same tone, "I promised him not to go until you had seen him. We are—we are—engaged."

"Stuff!" replied the Colonel, "that is out of the question; your aunt and uncle have to be consulted first. What can you mean by talking in that way?"

"Indeed, uncle, I don't wish to displease you," she said, in the greatest distress, "but it is as I tell you; it was only finally arranged yesterday, or I would have come to you before."

This was too much for the Colonel. The moonlight story, and all Jane Turnbull's information, were fresh in his memory, and for the first time in his life, he despised the gentle being before him. "Ethel, you wicked, bad girl," he said, seizing her, and not too softly, by the wrist, "do you dare to look in my face with such a falsehood as that on your lips? Do you think that I am ignorant of all your goings on during the past three weeks?"

Indelicate I know you to have been, but I was not prepared for falsehood as well."

Poor Ethel. Such words as these were strangers to her ears. From her childhood upward, she had heard nothing like them addressed either to herself, or to the few associates she had. Edgar had prepared her the day before for the moonlight *eclaircissement*, by informing her of all that had passed between good-natured Mrs. Turnbull and himself, but to hear her conduct stamped as indelicate, and her present speech as untrue, was more than her young heart could bear. In a burst of agony she threw her arms round her uncle's neck, and prayed him to withdraw "those hard, hard sayings. If he would only see Edgar. Edgar would set it all right. She did not know how to be indelicate. Oh! only let him see Edgar, and withdraw those hard words, and only wait till he had seen Edgar."

This speaking however, of Markham, by his Christian name, only made the Colonel worse. "Don't dare to talk to me of Edgar," he said, as he repulsed her affectionate embrace. He could not speak on this subject, he was so shocked. Her duplicity seemed the more glaring, because it was so little expected. She had better go to her room and calm herself, and to-morrow Lady Nelthorpe and he would talk to her, and whatever right feeling she had left, would probably show her the impropriety and folly of her conduct, but for the present she must leave him. He was not sufficiently master of himself to discuss the question just now. There—go.

And Ethel did go at the very moment that her aunt entered. But she gave no heed to her,—the words "indelicate, falsehood," were ringing in her ears. She passed out for a moment to the drawing-room to fetch some little trifle she had left

there mechanically, for she did not want it, whatever it was.

The Colonel was so angry, that the moment she was gone, he set to work storming at his wife, for no other ostensible reason, than because that sensible lady began to point to him that he was making a mistake.

"That would never do with Ethel," she observed. "If the girl was what she thought her, she would just throw herself into Markham's arms. And he, Markham, was not a man to allow her to be browbeaten. He would urge her to assert the right, which the law gave her at twenty-one, of choosing for herself, and where should they all be then?"

To all which the Colonel only re-expressed his feelings, that Markham might go to the bottom of the sea for all he cared; and that no parson, nor any one else, should stand between him and his will. Finally, he told his wife that she was a fool, and as she had the door open previous to leaving it on receiving this gratuitous piece of information, he concluded his expression of opinion with the following remark, loud enough to be heard by Ethel herself, on her return from the drawing-room through the corridor, to her own apartment.

"She will go to town with me at two," he said, "if I have to carry her to the carriage by force."

And now it was that the poor girl experienced that feeling of desolation which, since her father's death, she had forgotten to think upon. She was alone. Force, the operation of all others which she thought would never be applied to her, was now to be put in action.

"Oh! Edgar," she said, throwing herself into the chair, "why did you not stay last night?" and she cried noiselessly but bitterly, and yet with some sort of consolation, for she thought how he

would protect if he was only by, and how he had held her to his heart only a few hours before. While she was thus weeping her griefs away, a small soft head intruded itself on her lap, and a softer voice said imploringly, "Forgive me, Cousin Ethel—it was I who told papa about yesterday—oh! pray forgive me."

"You, Angelica!" said Ethel astonished.

"Yes, I, Ethel; I waited ever so long in the hope that you would tell him yourself; but what was I to do?" and the little girl again laid her head fondly on her cousin's lap, and said, "Oh! forgive me."

Under the peculiar hardship of her own case Ethel might in truth be excused, if at first she was disposed to judge Angelica's conduct unfairly. But if she did so it was but for a very few moments. Her young cousin's artless tale of her struggle between duty to her father and affection for her (Ethel) found a responsive chord in her own bosom, and she almost trembled to think that she would have done the same, had their positions been reversed. Ethel began to understand the truth now as she listened to the detail of Angelica's scruples. It was not difficult for her to see, that the moonlight scene, if witnessed by others, and the position in which she was standing in Newlands drawing-room the day preceding, might bear a very indelicate aspect to those who knew not the circumstances of the engagement, and so she willingly forgave her little cousin for any injury she might have done her, though it did strike her that Angelica might have spoken to her first, in which case she could have gone to her uncle herself, and so saved some of the imputation under which she now laboured. However there was no help for it. The only subject for present consideration was, what was to be done. Angelica, now that any misgivings she

might have had respecting the course she had pursued were removed by her cousin's forgiveness, offered to assist her in every way in her power towards getting Edgar over to Newlands by two o'clock, or delaying Ethel's journey if he did not arrive: and the two girls set their simple heads together with this view.

I ought to have mentioned, that on this very morning before Ethel took the step of placing her position before her uncle, as we have seen she did, she had thought it better to send over an express to Edgar representing the new aspect of affairs. The question was how to manage without the danger of its being intercepted. There was no one on whom she could rely but Pansy, and though this latter had hitherto avoided being a go-between, excepting in the conversation at Miss Piminy's, when she thought it a duty Edgar owed to Ethel to declare their engagement; the present difficulty was so pressing, that she was induced to put on a garden bonnet, to trip across the park to the Rose Inn at Drellington, and to forward two papers to Edgar, one to be left at Holycross, and the other to be taken on to Lord Tramontane's, in case he had not started on his return journey from thence. Ethel now was mad to send off a second express, although it is not difficult to perceive that there could be but little advantage from such a proceeding, and Angelica, whose conscience was eased respecting the part she had pursued towards her father, but who was desirous of making amends for having caused Ethel distress, offered to be the means of conveying this second express to the village. "She had some books to take over to the Vicarage," she said; "nobody would suspect her, and she would do it so well, if Cousin Ethel would only trust her; such confidence would show that she bore no malice for the course she had pursued." Of course Ethel

consented, and the younger girl actually compounded with her own conscience for the dutiful act she had at first committed by committing one now just the reverse. But such is continually the case in human nature. Isolated individual acts of virtue are common; they are the work of the regenerate nature too often stifled. An unblemished course of virtue has never existed since the beginning but *once*! All our virtue has its drawback in some one vice.

Angelica was off, and Ethel quietly composed herself to dream. "When could he arrive? Would he not protect her?" She almost smiled when she thought of the quiet, unruffled way in which he would meet her uncle's indignation. "Oh! Edgar, come—I have no one but you now—you must love me now—more than ever;" and she went over the whole of their meeting yesterday, in which she had ample food for dreams.

While she was passing her time so pleasantly, much fuss had been made in the house about Miss Miller. "Where was Miss Miller? the Colonel must see her immediately." Miss Miller had gone out, Leggatt supposed, but she would not probably be long. But the Colonel was fairly out of temper; "he did not understand what all the something servants were coming to now-a-days. Let Miss Miller know, when she returns, that she is to accompany her mistress to town at two o'clock." This message was faithfully delivered, and much more faithfully than messages generally are delivered in a household of this sort. Pansy received the announcement for the first time in her life, that she was looked on as a menial. For the first time in her life she flushed up with a feeling very much akin to angry passion. Probably the Colonel was not aware of the cruel wrong he did her. She could not suffer on the score of pride of birth. But

he forgot, that in the Anglo-Saxon there is a pride almost as strong—the pride of education! and this Pansy had.

Pansy betook herself to Ethel's room with her cheeks burning and her eyes flashing, and there the two exchanged sorrows and comforted each other. The former was soon consoled, for Ethel reminded her that she would live with her, and that Edgar would be as fond of her as she Ethel herself, and that all difficulties would soon be over, for she had sent another express for him. So that Pansy in a very short time forgot the Colonel and all his rudeness. One thing, however, very much puzzled her. Ethel talked exactly as if she were not going, and yet suffered a maid to take all her directions for what dress she would wear on the journey, and other little things betokening a departure. Moreover, the idea of a rebellion against the Colonel's will appeared to Pansy little short of insanity; and in this light she was half inclined to look at Ethel's contradictory behaviour, thinking, perhaps, that her head was turned slightly by the excitement of the morning. The same circumstances seemed also inexplicable to Angelica when she returned. "Why, Ethel," she cried, "what is the use of Chapman's packing up your things if you are not going?"

"Oh! let her pack," said Ethel, who was still dreaming; "she will only tease me, unless she does it." And she wrapped herself up as before in her reflections. The worst of all this was that it necessitated Pansy's looking after some packing as well. Her journey to town had been quite unforeseen, and now, as the many hurried arrangements which it brought with it crowded on her mind, she was perfectly aghast at Ethel's behaviour. "What was to become of the organ at Holycross? Should she write to Mr. Markham respecting it, or would Ethel?" but Ethel answered mechanically, that

“Edgar would be here soon, and there was no reason to worry about that till he arrived.” And so the time passed on, until Chapman proceeded to array her young mistress in a dark silk travelling dress, all of which she underwent as a matter of course, with her thoughts far elsewhere; after which they were summoned to the luncheon room. It was as *triste* a proceeding, that luncheon, as one can well imagine: the Colonel did not show,—Mrs. Wreford was present, and pleased to see her niece so far advanced in her preparations as to have completed her attire, all save her bonnet and shawl, she greeted her with a kiss and an affectionate embrace, which Ethel received kindly, but without a word, and in the same manner as she had done everything else,—the governess with one or two of her charges, younger sisters of Angelica, was also present, but confined her conversation chiefly to *sotto voce* communications with her pupils,—Pansy was present, with her face blistered with the marks of former tears, and looking a very crushed, besmeared, and ill-cared for Pansy; Angelica alone of the party looked unconcerned, and busied herself with all kinds of little offices for Ethel, none of which however seemed to have the least effect in drawing the latter from her land of dreams. Mrs. Wreford was supremely uncomfortable; she had certainly disapproved of her niece’s conduct during the past month, but she was not certain that the Colonel’s behaviour of the morning could in the least degree be defended, on the ground of either justice or expediency, and Ethel’s present manner betokened anything but so speedy and satisfactory a conclusion to the difficulty as he seemed to contemplate. She certainly appeared to have made up her mind to the journey, which was something to be sure; but how could it end there?—she had watched the developement of that young life in its every

stage, and could not forget its mysterious attachments, and how the heart bled when those attachments were rudely severed. How could she forget the decease of her brother Edward Conway, and still later, the parting from Eva? These however, were unavoidable; but from Markham, would the separation from him—this new-found love—be acquiesced in even as readily as they were?—And Markham, too, himself? Mrs. Wreford had a very great respect for this man's abilities, and principles, which not even his late clandestine conduct in gaining Ethel's love could entirely eradicate—would he, certain as of course he must be, of the possession of Ethel's love, surrender his right to her hand, just because her uncle took her off to London in this summary manner? If he followed them, was he a man to be put off from seeing her by subterfuges? She knew he was not; she felt convinced that the moment he found himself played with, he would put into force all those talents he possessed in so eminent a degree, and with all her natural partiality for her own husband, she could not but feel that he, in such a struggle, would be no match for the Curate.

All these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind as she looked on Ethel's soft, quiet features, with eyes cast down, and almost hid under their long fringes, and with no expression in them save that of the deepest reverie. Mrs. Wreford had an undefinable dread of something disagreeable approaching, which she in vain attempted to dispel. But time was getting on, and the party began to disperse to their rooms; half-past one,—the third quarter,—and now two, without a sign of Markham; in another half hour they would be on the road. Poor Pansy's perplexity was extreme, for Ethel's manner had been becoming more and more uncommunicative, and nothing would induce her

to break the silence that had now fallen on her. In the same apathetic mechanical way as she had allowed herself to be dressed before luncheon, she now adjusted her bonnet and shawl, and Pansy was forced to regard this as the only means of information as to her future movements, and to robe as she robed, and take up her gloves and muff as she did, and follow her out of her sleeping apartment to the drawing room fully attired for the journey.

It was the first quarter past two, Mrs. Wreford was alone in the room, and Ethel thus broke silence at last. "I am just going down the garden for a few moments, for some flowers, aunt. I suppose I shall have time."

"Certainly, my child," said the elder lady; "you have more than ten minutes to spare."

"Please tell uncle where I am gone," said Ethel.

"It won't be necessary," said her aunt, "for you will be back before he is ready. The carriage is not come round yet."

And Ethel passed out of the room and took her way up the shrubbery to the gardens, which, though not far off, were still not quite close to the house. Her aunt thought that the fresh air would do her no harm, particularly if she were alone, and signed to Pansy not to follow her; so the latter stayed in the drawing-room behind.

"You must be very gentle with her, Pansy," said Mrs. Wreford, "and soothe her as you always do. Mind you write and let me know every day how she is."

"Yes, Mrs. Wreford," said Pansy, in her quietest tones. She always got kind words in this quarter. "But please tell me, what am I to do about the organ at Holycross? I suppose I may not write to Mr. Markham about it. He had no idea that I was going away, more than I had, and

it will seem so ill-bred in me not to write some excuse."

"I must manage that for you," said Mrs. Wreford. "But Pansy, you must understand that all connection with this Mr. Markham will now have to be broken off, and therefore, when I write to him to-night for you, it will be to tell him definitely that he must find another organist for his church."

This was a cruel blow to Pansy; for the happiest time of her life had been the few months when she had been making herself useful at the little hamlet. She knew too how she would be missed, not only at the instrument, but elsewhere. But she had not time to think of her disappointment, for these words also suggested a train of thought in reference to poor loving Ethel, her sister by more than blood.

"Then there is no chance of their being married," she said to the elder lady.

"Not the remotest," replied the other decisively, "though I do not wish you to tell her so; she must find that out from her uncle's advice, and from her own sense of right. They are in every respect unfit for each other by rank, disposition, fortune, and other points besides. Such a union would not only be a very unhappy union, but would be a scandal to all the acknowledged rules of society."

Pansy sighed and said nothing. In her unsophisticated way of thinking, she had set such a marriage down as one of the most natural coincidences which could take place in the world, and as the most felicitous arrangement which human wisdom ever planned. It is needless to say that Mrs. Wreford did not believe one word of what she had just said, except so far as it related to the difference of fortune in the parties. She continued: "Ethel however will doubtless suffer a little, Pansy, and it is to you I look for informa-

tion as to how she bears it, and that you will try and make her reconciled to what must be."

"Indeed, Mrs. Wreford, said Pansy," her bright eyes filling with tears, "I do think it will kill her."

"Not it," said the Colonel, entering at that moment, and speaking without a shade remaining of his former displeasure. "I wonder, Pansy, you did not make this property your own; you had plenty of opportunities while we were all away. It would have been a capital thing for you."

Pansy blushed scarlet, for she thought of what he had said in the morning. "Yes," she said to herself, "lower than that would have been good enough for me." Then aloud, and with a little hauteur, which sat uncommonly well on her, she continued: "Mr. Markham, out of respect to his family and abilities, could never ally himself with one who was born a servant, even if I had been worthy of him in other respects."

The Colonel looked surprised, and then laughed outright. "Well, you know best, I suppose, about that. But now fetch Ethel, for we must be starting. By-the-by, Georgiana, you must just speak to Mrs. Cundall at the Rose. She has sent me the worst pair of posters I ever saw, and says that the others, her best pair, have been out all the morning, and are unfit to work. Very odd! who can have been using them in Drellington? Beeze is away, and Gascoigne hates posters."

Meanwhile Pansy was off to find Ethel.

There is no reason to suppose, that when the latter left the house, as we have seen, on her visit to the flower gardens, she had the remotest idea of the course she was afterwards led by her fears to pursue. That she erred in keeping her engagement a secret, so far as it was an engagement, we have no intention of disputing: but it is to be

hoped that no part of our exertions in chronicling her history has been so drawn as to lead the reader to suppose her by nature a deceitful girl. So far from it, those who really knew her have averred her to be the soul of confidence and honour. Trustful in the extreme to those who trusted her, she can hardly be said to have ever had a secret ; and if there were feelings in the inmost recesses of that young heart which were only shared by Pansy, their suppression resulted more from a general timidity and diffidence of disposition, than from any tendency to concealment or deceit. In the present instance she had been brooding all the morning over the last interview with Edgar, as a means for strengthening herself for the trials she might undergo. She really had no intention whatever of going to town with her uncle ; but she had mechanically taken every step, as we have seen, which would lead to that result, under the idea that Edgar would arrive in person at the last moment to thwart her departure, or that some assistance would be afforded her to overcome it. It was whilst she was brooding on in this way that she betook herself to the gardens, whence she knew she could catch a view of the high road which led from Holycross, and over which he might be expected to come. But the sight brought no relief ; and the words of her uncle threatening force that morning, which she had hitherto almost succeeded in excluding from her mind, painfully recurred to it in all their vividness. What should she do ? Her promise to Edgar was most sacred in her eyes, and then of a sudden her words, nearly the last she uttered, and which had made him laugh, came rushing back to her memory : " If they should make me run away ! " What if she did so now ? The idea once caught gained ground with lightning rapidity. She would go now—this moment—to Aunt Wilford—Aunt Wilford, who had made the promise

to her father never to constrain her, as well as Aunt and Uncle Wreford. She would not give her up, at all events, not to-night, not till Edgar had come, and then she had no fear. She was angry with herself for never having thought of this before. And in a few moments she was away across the park towards Drellington, and that gate was almost in sight, where on the one ever-to-be-cherished night he had made her so blest.

The Colonel was getting impatient, when Pansy returned with the news that Ethel was not to be found; and well he might be, for she had taken nearly a quarter of an hour in the search, and Mrs. Cundall's posterns were not likely to overtake any train which might be beginning to move. When she communicated her news, the worthy senator's impatience immediately frothed up into indignation, a specimen of which we have had already. First he fell upon Pansy, accusing her of being a partner in the plot—a rather unlikely imputation, when we consider that any such partner with a grain of common care for her own comfort would undoubtedly have gone too—and attacking her with reminiscences of her birth and position, and the bread she had eaten at his table—all of which frightened the poor little girl nearly into a fit; and then he turned upon his wife, for her folly in permitting her niece to enter the gardens at all; and finally, he fastened on the unfortunate post-boy at the hall-door for the horses his mistress had sent. In short, the uproar was at its height, and some half dozen contradictory orders had been given respecting a pursuit, for he made no doubt but that his niece had gone direct to Holycross, when a servant from the Hermitage with the following note rather simplified the matter by making every one of them unnecessary.

"MY DEAR COLONEL,

"Our niece Ethel arrived here only a quarter of an hour ago, almost out of her senses, imploring my help and protection for the present. Remembering the promise I gave to her father, I have accorded this. I imperfectly understand the cause of her distress, but it seems to have something to do with *that* Mr. Markham, whom we all like so much, and no doubt will easily be set right. At present she is lying down, and Dr. Doolittle, who has just come in, orders that on no account she should be disturbed.

"Your affectionate Sister,

"JOHANNA WILFORD.

"Hermitage, Drellington,

"Tuesday, 2.45 P.M."

"Was there ever such an ass as that woman?" said the Colonel, flinging the note over to his wife.

Before that lady could reply, who should enter the room but Major Pander, with his face like a lobster, and in a tremendous heat. "Excuse me, my dear Colonel," he gasped, "only one word, as I know you are hurried,—are the ministers out?"

"Ministers out!" roared the Colonel, now ready to fly into a passion at any thing. "The man must be demented."

"Hey, Colonel!" cried the Major, suddenly metamorphosed from the lobster into a turkey-cock; "what's that; demented, d'ye say? When a man sends his own daughter all the morning to the principal inn in the place to order expresses off, he must do it for some purpose."

This was too much for the Colonel, on whom a gleam of light respecting the posters suddenly broke, and beating a hasty retreat, he locked himself up in his library, where for the present we will leave him.

One would think that this last aspect which

affairs had taken, could not have been in the highest degree pleasing to Angelica. But that young lady perfectly preserved her presence of mind, and her sense of the ridiculous, although the late disclosure would have been somewhat appalling to most minds. Betaking herself at once to the nursery, where you may be sure these matters had been discussed in all their bearings, she gave vent with the greatest amount of glee imaginable to the following announcement: "I say, Hopkins," to the head nurse, "here is fun; Ethel has run away, and papa and mamma are beaten after all."



CHAPTER XXI.

OBSTACLES.

AND where was Edgar all this time? The distance from Newlands to Auster Park was not over nine miles, and might easily have been covered by an express under the hour. The first had been despatched before ten, with orders to proceed direct to that locality. The return would have occupied such a man as Edgar, on such an errand, little more than half that time; and yet now, at three in the afternoon, his beloved, his Ethel, was asleep on a sofa in her aunt's room, with her half dishevelled hair hanging over her feverish cheeks, muttering his name in her uneasy sleep, and starting with a sort of nightmare jerk as she mentioned it; and still nothing had been heard of Edgar.

It is high time to look after him.

The first express, then, arrived at Auster Park between ten and eleven in the forenoon. The Earl and Edgar were out: gone to look at some almshouses which the former was building some two or three miles off in the contrary direction to that of Holycross. But the messenger's orders were explicit, and he must follow them thither. He did so; and Ethel's few lines, telling nothing except that she would be *taken* away at two o'clock, and written in terms of the most earnest entreaty, were delivered to him. His heart gave a bound, for he

rapidly comprehended the danger. "I must go, my lord; it is as I half feared," he said, "they will juggle her away from me."

"How? what?" said Lord Tramontane, who had been made acquainted with the whole affair, and who anticipated much entertainment in seeing that "whig of a colonel's" pride pulled down.

Edgar gave him the note. "There is not much in it," he said; "but if it were a volume it could not tell me more."

He gave it back with the observation, "Well, this admits of no delay, Markham; you had better take one of my saddle-horses. Have whichever you like."

"Your lordship is very good," said Edgar; "but I should only throw them down, and kill myself into the bargain. No; my own pony is stout and active, and he knows the road; and as he is my own, I shall not fear to push him, if necessary, in such a case."

"Well, God bless you, my dear fellow," said the Earl, sincerely; "only let me know to-night how all prospers. I will come over myself to-morrow, if there is any difficulty between the lady and her relations; use me just as you please. By Jove! it makes me feel quite young again," as no doubt he devoutly wished it did; but it did not, for he was eighty, and at that age nothing ever will.

Edgar thanked the kind old man with much warmth, saying at the same time, "If I can only stop this London journey, I have no fear for the result," and left him without further delay.

But there was still much to be done. He had to get back to the house, and Sugarplum had to be harnessed and put to; and a few civilities had to be paid to old Lady Tramontane, who, though as deaf as a post, liked still to hear pretty complimentary nothings said to her; so that it was just

mid-day as Edgar came in sight of the spire of Holycross.

And yet there was no ground for alarm, although he did press forward so anxiously. It still wanted two full hours to the prescribed time of Ethel's departure, and twenty minutes would do the distance easily.

At home Edgar found the second express, and this one alarmed him exceedingly; for it disclosed that all had been discovered, their yesterday's interview included, and that force would be used to take Ethel away, if he were not there. And yet what need of alarm, for there is time enough? Alas! the greatest. Here is another express, though of a humbler kind—one on foot. Gabriel Cooper, one of the most exemplary of his parishioners, is at the point of death, and wants him,—*him, Edgar*, who has the cure of his and others' souls in this district. He lives at Cromore, the very furthest point in Holycross parish distant from Newlands, which can only be reached by means of roads ordinarily bad, and to be traversed at a foot's pace, and now rendered almost impassable by March rains.

Shall we say that Edgar hesitated? If he did, it was not as to which course he should take; that was decided at the moment he received Gabriel Cooper's message. But he might naturally think, what will become of Ethel? what will she think of me?—I, who could have come, but would not! For of course only the fact will be represented to her, but not the reason; that is but the world. Oh, torture! my Ethel, and I cannot come to her! "You will lose her," said the tempter; "lose her of your own act. Gabriel may not—in all certainty cannot die till night; you will have time to return after having gained Ethel; but leave her now, and she is lost to you! See here! see the hour when

you can build your own fortunes, and you will not!"

But Edgar, if he looked mournful and half wretched,—for he was beginning to taste the bitterness of the cup he had mixed for himself,—neither hesitated nor despaired; for the Spirit said on the other side, "Except the LORD build the house, *their* labour is but *lost* who build it. Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in *vain*."

What taught Edgar to take this line of conduct? The *Church*, reader, the *Church*!

"Faith without works is dead." If ever man believed, he did; and not from reason,—though he had reason enough, in very truth, from the blessings showered on him through Eva and otherwise during the last few years on which to ground his faith,—but by the grace received first in Holy Baptism, to which he had so oft in after years shown despite, but which, renewed through affliction in Sydney, showed its fruit in this great work. He could not now "grieve the HOLY SPIRIT that was within him," knowingly, at least; for he had persuaded himself that he had not done so in making his engagement: all real faith is entire. So holy Mother Church, and she alone, teaches. Sects, schismatics, dissenters may tell of faith, whole, without works, or of works without faith, or of faith just so far as reason permits; but the Church, and the Church only, teaches the *first* entire, the two inseparable. So was Edgar's faith as he moved off to Cromore.

Sugarplum's feelings, as he blundered along the splashing, waggon-rutted road, must have been as little agreeable as his master's; for he had received his early breakfast in the well-provided stables at Auster Park, and nothing since; and being a sagacious beast, had no doubt made up his mind to

an exhilarating refection of beans, and who knows, a cooling refresher, in the shape of a bran mash as well, before he left those hospitable boxes. But it could not be helped; and so he blundered on, doubtless sick at stomach, until they at last reached Cromore at past one in the day.

An hour later, while Ethel was weeping out her sorrows at Aunt Wilford's feet, Gabriel's soul returned to the Maker Who sent it here, and Edgar's prayers were accompanying it thither, and Edgar's sympathy was soothing the troubled hearts of those humble ones he left behind. Ethel knew not this: not that she even expressed a word of complaint at his unaccountable delay, though her heart did rise upwards once or twice with the thought that this was different from what she expected of him. Perhaps, had she questioned herself, she would have remembered her own ideal of him, and that in her eyes he could do no wrong. Would, too, that we could all, in like circumstances, suspend our judgments until the doubted one is present to explain! Many a sad tale, a sad lifetime, would be averted, if we could. But Ethel, now that the danger was passed, fairly broke down: she had no power even to reflect, and after some few hysterical fits, she sank to rest,—a feeble, troubled rest, to be sure, but comparative rest still,—within her aunt's chamber.

But Edgar is again on his road homewards. And now a further trouble comes to add to that succession of obstacles which had stood between him and the moment of explanation which he thought was to smooth away all difficulties. It was the end of March, and the weather had for some time been unsettled and stormy. This day it had promised better: the sun in the morning had shone brightly, and though now and then heavy clouds shut out its light suddenly, still

the wind was high, and gave assurance that it would keep off rain. So far this had been fortunate; for in the hurry of his departure from Auster Park, his umbrellas, waterproof cloaks, and other paraphernalia, which country parsons are obliged always to have with them, had been left behind. At the present moment however, the importance of his loss became apparent. Just as he was entering the upper or western ridge of Upper-shot Common, a most tremendous shower of rain and snow, driven with all the force of a northeaster on that most agreeable locality, met him. Shelter was out of the question. Sugarplum staggered along, half blinded, half blown over, by the fury of the tempest; and when the two arrived at Holycross, between three and four in the afternoon, they looked nearly drowned and thoroughly beaten by the combined influences which had attacked them.

To present himself at Newlands, as a suitor for the hand of its fairest daughter, in such a plight as the present, was out of the question. He must change his dress. Two things comforted him for the infliction. First, that no carriage from Newlands had been seen to pass through towards Gramford that afternoon, at least as far as could be ascertained. Secondly, if they had gone, half an hour could make no difference in his arrival at the house. Cool, you will say. Perhaps so! but perfectly natural nevertheless. It must be remembered, that he was a little worn with fatigue and anxiety, a little disheartened, and most completely wet through. Another reason too, conspired to restrain what impetuosity was left in him. He had expected to find a third express from Ethel, though why he hardly knew. And this set him thinking on what he should do now? Edgar had been bred in the school of disappointment. Bitter

experience had taught him that nearly every suffering he had known in life had been owing to his own want of forethought. He had gone to Belgium six years before without thinking; he had adopted every view laid before him with respect to the state of his affairs at the close of that excursion without thinking; he had gone to Australia without thinking. And all these things had induced those habits of self-control, which he afterwards bound himself to observe, and without which he knew, that no scheme which he had in hand could by possibility succeed. And so now, with the full remembrance of former miscarriages, he proceeded to shape his course this afternoon, while he dressed himself somewhat leisurely. Another sense too, kept him calm and composed under circumstances which would have irritated most men. The sense of his having done his duty in relinquishing Ethel for the sick man at Cromore. I know nothing in life so heavenly as this feeling. It has been rare enough with me, God knows, but the once or twice that I have followed it, has counterbalanced in its results, half a lifetime of affliction. It is the only pleasure which is glorious in its aftertaste. The most innocent pleasure in this life has its alloy in the disinclination to regular labour, which follows it or the fatigue, or what not. But drink deep of the cup of duty, my friend; it never intoxicates, though it always gives pleasure; it never excites, though it stimulates to further draughts; and its aftertaste is always the same,—*Peace!*

After some reflection, he thought it would be better not to go to Newlands first. It might be that the Colonel had taken a longer round in order to avoid Holycross in his road to Gramford, and then he should be admitted to Mrs. Wreford, who would coolly receive him, and pretend to know

nothing of the matter. Or they might not have started, and orders might be left at the lodge gates not to admit him. No! he would go to the Hermitage and sound her other aunt, and so shape his further movements. But this would necessitate his entering Drellington by way of Callington, as he could not pass Newlands Lodge, which was on the regular road without trying its gates, and though not much further round, it ought to be spared for Sugarplum's sake, who had just been reported as unable to touch his corn. Well, there was no help for it. Sugarplum must have some beer, which as all the world knows, is an admirable restorative for a beaten horse,—and so it proved in this case. The inhabitants of shady Callington were startled at a quarter-past four that afternoon, by the Curate's cart literally flying through the little hamlet, and presenting a striking appearance certainly. The weather had quite cleared; a bright, and for the time of year, rather a warm sun had taken the place of the late storm, and Markham exhilarated for the moment by the change, and by the prospect of immediate action, requiring all his shrewdness, sagacity, and address, had pushed the pony to his utmost speed over the three miles which intervened between Holycross and Drellington. Sugarplum soon became covered with foam, (or as it is technically termed, lather;) the cart was a frightful spectacle of dirt, rain, and hard travelling—and as a contrast to the two, sat Edgar himself, looking spick, span, and clean, and with a curious open-amused smile upon his face at the looks of the open-mouthed folk whom he passed.

You may be sure that these appearances were not lost either upon Drellington itself. That important locality had been fearfully excited during the afternoon with what had taken place at Newlands during the morning. In the first place, the

boy who carried the second express, *that* forwarded by Angelica, had found the note come open in his hand, by accident of course, and after laying its contents to heart, had communicated them to Mrs. Cundall, his mistress, who after reprimanding him severely for not knowing his place better than to read other folks' letters, and that great folks' too, took the intelligence herself, and freely disseminated it through the village.

In the second place, Hopkins, Mrs. Wreford's nurse, enlightened by Angelica, carried her news in a walk she took with the younger children, to Miss Piminy, whom she was constantly visiting, though that lady had neither nurses nor children either, and never offered her refreshment when she called. In short, the topic was almost a stale one in the place, when Edgar drove through towards the Hermitage. Ned Gascoigne saw him from the windows of the reading-room, and remarked that he was a cool hand with a vengeance. Pander being in the street doing nothing, an employment to which he very sedulously applied himself, wheezed with delight, for the Colonel would be floored now, and the Colonel had insulted him a couple of hours before. Miss Piminy, who was in the stationer's shop prizing penny tracts, remarked to young Doolittle, who was there also for no reason apparent, "that coming events cast their shadows before," a sentiment which young Doolittle's apprehension was unable to grasp.

But Edgar in his rapid passage onwards saw none of these, excepting Pander, upon whom he bestowed one of his good-humoured nods. Despite his self-command the near approach to *that* gate, where on *that* night *she* became his own, made him feel half-frightened; and now he was traversing the narrow road which led to it, and opposite was the Vicarage, from whose windows that scene had been

beheld. He turned his head, but no faces were there now. Perhaps within, through half-dimmed glasses over a pretence of work, sympathising Mrs. Turnbull looked the inquiry, "Why did he tarry?"

But he is there now and in the drawing-room, rendered celebrated in these annals only by Mrs. Pander's maiden efforts at picquet and Ethel's tears for Coleman. Here he is alone. The room is handsome, the walls hung simply with a few choice pictures, the relics of the late General Wilford, and the furniture no doubt is good, but as is always the case in widows' houses, is impenetrably encased in brown holland coverings, from which no mortal eye has ever seen them emerge: for Mrs. Wilford gives no parties, which are the only occasions when such chrysalides become butterflies. The only other peculiarity in the room is, that there is a faint smell of dried rose leaves, or of dried lavender, or of something partaking of both, and of something else besides. All this struck the senses of Edgar, waiting as he was, and rendered peculiarly acute as they were by the nervous anxiety which, in spite of himself, now at this last moment was creeping with a sort of magnetic influence over him.

At last Mrs. Wilford entered, plain, greyhaired, kind, but reproachful.

"Mr. Markham! where have you been?"

This was enough. She knew something.

"Oh, tell me," said Edgar, his anguish breaking out. "Where is she? Where is Ethel?"

"Have you a right to ask before you answer my question?" said the old lady, gloating over her quiet indignation. "How many hours?—let me see—"

"Mrs. Wilford! for the reasons which have guided my conduct, and which must account for my delay, I will be judged by Ethel; she will not

only acquit, but approve; only for pity's sake, tell me where is she? Has she gone?"

"Then you have not been at Newlands?"

"No!"

She was inclined again to commence a stricture upon his conduct, not one iota of which it is needless to say she had ever understood, but she looked on his anxious face. It was so deadly pale, a sign she had never noticed before, and though it retained that girlish clearness which no one, young or old, ever saw without being interested, had acquired now such a terrible earnestness in every feature, that her own heart broke down.

"My poor dear man!" she said, "Ethel is safe here in this house, asleep up stairs. She was not false, though you delayed. At the last moment she left her uncle's house, and threw herself on my protection. A foolish step, and one for which you must answer: it may cause her many a tear through life—that one step; by it, perhaps, she has snapped a tie which bound her to those who brought her up; you have to answer for this."

Edgar had at the commencement of this speech hid his face in his hands to conceal the blood which joy was driving to his cheeks. He now removed them, and throwing one hand up to heaven while his face turned in the same direction, he cried out with an animation that almost took the old lady's breath away, "I knew it—I knew it!" He alluded to Cromore and poor humble Gabriel Cooper. Happy were we all, did we even in smaller matters give to God the glory too!

Turning now cheerfully to Mrs. Wilford, he questioned her respecting the transactions which made Ethel take this step. She told him all that we already know, and that besides about an hour ago her sister Wreford had called, and bewailed to her "how foolish it was of the Colonel to talk of using

force when he never intended it ; and how foolish it was of Ethel to have thought he would have used it. At the same time no one could wonder that the Colonel should object to a marriage fraught with such unhappiness to both parties, disparity of age, of fortune, of rank," &c., and many other things, upon the recital of which even Mrs. Wilford was fain to sigh and shake her head.

"What is your sister's age, Mrs. Wilford?" asked Edgar.

"Georgiana," began the old lady upon her fingers, "must be forty, if she is an hour, and she is the youngest."

"The Colonel is fifty-one, for he told me so," said Edgar. "So much for disparity of age. And stay, did he not marry before his brother died?"

"Certainly!" said Mrs. Wilford, her head quite bewildered by the rapidity of his questions, and not in the least seeing what he was at,—“how did you know that?"

"He told me," said Edgar, "that he had only his pay in the Guards till his brother broke his neck."

"Quite true," she replied, "and there was such a business about it when he married Georgiana."

"Well!" said Edgar, "never mind the question of age and fortune, or even of rank. I want to ask another question. How was it that Mrs. Wrexford could attribute Ethel's flight only to the fear of force being employed against her? This imputation of 'indelicacy and falsehood,' did she think that had nothing to do with it?"

"Oh! no; she said expressly that it was the idea of force being employed which frightened Ethel."

"But do you believe that?"

"Mr. Markham," said the old lady majestically, "my sister and my brother-in-law are incapable of falsehood."

He turned and looked her full in the face.

"As the world goes, no doubt," he said, "they are. And yet for more than a week—a week, mind—they led her on to promise to take a journey most distasteful to her, on the ground that her presence was required in London by a sick aunt, Lady Nelthorpe, who from a newspaper lying on Lord Tramontane's table this morning I saw was at the Countess of Partington's *soirée* yesterday evening."

Mrs. Wilford was confounded.

"Do not be distressed," he said; "these things are common in the world; but if you expect honour and duty at the hands of a priest of the Church, you must not fight him with such weapons as these. It was not with such weapons that I have been successful this day. I might have been here one hour before Ethel was to have left, but I must have—stay, I am boasting. Tell me, Mrs. Wilford, you are clear about this 'indelicacy and falsehood.'"

"I am certain," she answered; "for Ethel cried about it, and my sister Georgiana allowed that it had been the commencement of the difference, but at the same time she was distinct in her impression, that the threat of force——"

"Never mind that," he said with a laugh and preparing to go, "it is the other point I care for. Colonel Wreford has given me a lever which I shall not fail to work. I am going now to Newlands, if you will ring the bell for my pony to be brought round. If Ethel wakes, tell her whither I am gone, and tell her also that I have no fear for the result, no fear but that three days hence she will, if she chooses it, be as much an inmate of Newlands as she was yesterday."

"You are very sanguine."

"I am," he said, "because I have done right, and Ethel has done right, and I have a faith some-

where, which when I feel this, will never fail me. The reward may be delayed, but it will come."

She looked on him, herself fascinated by that heavenly smile, the offspring only, though she knew it not, of heavenly thoughts, but looking more intently she could not but notice the terrible paleness which hung over his countenance, and for the first time it struck her that he was exhausted.

"You must have a glass of wine before you go, or you will be ill," she said.

"Not I," he replied, "the very sense of action would keep me alive, and even the smallest stimulant now might make me lose my head. No, Ethel shall be mine by acquiescence, if not by consent, before I break my fast."

A servant entered at this juncture to say that Mr. Markham's pony seemed very poorly, and that George, Mrs. Wilford's factotum on such matters, thought he ought not to go out no how.

"Pooh! pooh!" said Edgar, "Sugarplum is no more beaten than his master. He must serve me at this pinch, if I give him clover for the rest of his days."

And so Sugarplum did. Whether it was that his instinct told him he was not going far, or that his master's step on entering the cart was more elastic, or that he knew he was going on Ethel's errand, and like a knight of old wearied with recent tournaments, was determined to break one more lance for his lady's smile, it is certain he trotted off with such vigour as quite to belie George's prognostications. So fast indeed that, as they wound up the drive towards the house at Newlands, Edgar was fain to hold him to a foot's pace. He did not wish it to be supposed he was arriving in a heat to throw himself at the feet of a guardian, who had abused an authority which had already expired. He knew as well as most men the effect which

manner produces, and so walked Sugarplum quietly up to the entrance, to the unbounded astonishment of Colonel Wreford, who surveyed him from the library windows under the impression that the expresses (of which he was now duly advised) must have missed him, and that he was profoundly ignorant of the morning's proceedings.

This was not improbable: for it was precisely the hour at which he had left word the day before, that he would call on the Colonel.



CHAPTER XXII.

REACTION.

It may naturally be asked, what had Colonel Wreford's feelings been on the subject of Ethel's and Edgar's attachment, since the former had, by a bold move, put it out of his power to exercise those decisive combinations which we have for some time been following? Of course, the first feeling was indignation, but only indignation at having been foiled. Had the Colonel examined his heart,—which, by the bye, I may remark, requires at times examination as to its movements in worldly actions, as well as it does in those which pertain to religion,—if he had examined his heart, he would have found that, personally, he had not the smallest objection to Markham as a husband for his niece; nor, even had the difficulty arisen in the same way with respect to his daughter, would he have objected to him as a son-in-law. He admired him for his frank, high-spirited, independent bearing, the cultivation of his mind, and the irresistible fascination of his manners. But he had settled his plans for Ethel's future disposal long before he ever saw Markham; not as to the person she was to marry, but as to the class she was to marry from.

As a man of the world, he looked on Ethel Conway, not as Ethel Conway, with her artless, simple

heart, nurtured in country life, and with her affections as guileless as the young wild fowl it was her delight to tend ; but as Ethel Conway, the niece of Colonel Wreford, the Member for Gramford,—Ethel Conway with some twenty-five thousand pounds, and a beauty that would make the stars of a London drawing-room wink again.

Again, he was a liberal Member of Parliament, and an advocate of *religious* liberty. Many of my serious thinking readers may know what that means, or, I should say, *often* means. I have no wish to offend any. But is it not true that opinions directly antagonistic to the Word of God,—that apathy, even scepticism, are sometimes allowed to fall under this category, “religious liberty,” by very many among our legislators? I do not say that Colonel Wreford precisely looked at things in this light, but he certainly held the Church cheap. I do not even say that he would have married his niece to a dissenting minister as willingly as he would to a minister of the Church ; but if he preferred the latter, it would not have been on the ground of faith, but simply because the profession, as represented by the last, is acknowledged in the society in which he moved, whereas the first is not. The truth is, the Colonel thought that his niece Ethel ought to do better than marry a parson.

There was an end, however, to all this now, and as he got cool he felt it. Markham she would marry, that was quite clear ; and the question was, whether it would be better to acquiesce in it, or to stand out on the ground of *mesalliance*—rather a paradox, when Markham’s family was as good as his own, and when old Tramontane would take them both up, and get the girl into society in town such as he, the Colonel, could never hope to move in. It could not be helped, he thought. He had played a game, and played it well, and had been

beaten. He would have to give in ; and as there is almost as much glory to a vanquished general, in repairing cleverly the disasters of a defeat, as in gaining the victory itself, he must now turn his mind to driving these people to think that their happiness was owing to *his* magnanimity, and not to their own success !

Such was his decision at the time his wife returned from her visit to the Hermitage : a decision which, inasmuch as it contained much real good in it, brought somewhat of comfort and consolation to his mind, but which rather militated against the principles which that lady had been enunciating during her visit there.

However, he told her nothing of his plans ; and she was, therefore, as much surprised afterwards at the course which affairs took, as old Mrs. Turnbull in the Vicarage, mourning over Edgar's delay, could have been.

But the latter is coming up the drive, and the Colonel has drawn from his manner in doing so, that he knows nothing of what has passed, and so receives him in the library with much cordiality, to the ill-disguised astonishment of the other.

" Ah, Markham, I am glad to see you, though I was nearly off this afternoon. I must have missed you, but that business connected with the estate compelled me to remain."

" Why will this man tell stories ?" thought Markham. " I ought not to let him go on.— Surely, you would rather have missed me, Colonel," he said, " than not ?"

" Why so ?" said the other, poking the fire, for want of something better to do.

" I am sure there is some mistake, and you are deceiving yourself," returned Markham ; " I know all that passed here this morning, Colonel."

" How was I to suppose that ?" replied the

other, sharply. "Then your coming here refers to that?"

"To what else could it refer?" said Markham.

"To what else? Why to the object for which you made the appointment yesterday."

"And which you were disposed to avoid," said the Curate.

"I don't understand your reasoning," said the Colonel; "you avoid plain questions, by raising accusations which have nothing to do with them. In plain speech, you had an object yesterday in leaving word that you would call on me at this time; and as I see you here, I conclude it is with that object. But you tell me that you know all that has passed this morning. If so, I should conceive that the object of this visit, supposing it to be my consent to your marriage with my niece, can be of no further account to you; for as she has thought proper to remove herself from my care, you would hardly care to ask it."

"And if I did,—or if it was yours to give, as when she was under your charge, you would withhold it: that is what you mean to add," said Edgar, quietly.

"Precisely—you hit my meaning to a nicety!" said the Colonel, who was getting himself into a nice passion; "and I mean further: knowing this as you do, why are you here now?"

"Not for the purpose of asking your consent," said Edgar, very distinctly. The Colonel looked at him with eyes of astonishment. "Not for that purpose, Colonel. You allow that your niece's removing herself from your care to that of her *other* guardian renders that unnecessary. Let me add, that before this, the asking your consent could only have been out of respect to yourself, and to the care with which you and yours have nurtured her: not from any legal obligation on her or me;

for the young lady being of age, your trust had expired. Do not misunderstand me ; we have no intention of marrying, as it is, without that consent. It would ill become *me* to ask her to fly in the face of those who have been to her as parents ; and it is contrary to her nature to take any step which would scandalise their notions of what is due to their *rank*, however exaggerated those notions may be. Therefore, though she may dwell with her other guardian, to avoid force in compelling her to take a contrary course to her wishes, she will not marry me in the face of your refusal. Nevertheless, the asking of your consent is a matter of respect only, and the determination not to marry without such consent is also a matter of respect only, and not done from any irresistible obligation. But, Colonel, I did not come to speak on this part of the subject. I came to clear that young lady, whose honour is dearer to me than the life within me, from the charges of indelicacy and falsehood."

The Colonel could hardly avoid starting. He saw how completely he had overreached himself.

"Any expression on that score, which I may have seen reason to use to my niece, is a matter for myself and her ; and which I cannot discuss with one who, on such subjects, must be in my eyes a stranger," said he, haughtily.

"Excuse me," said Markham ; "the expressions, though used in reference to her conduct, arise out of circumstances in which mine is equally called in question. If they be true with respect to her, I must be the guilty person ; for I led her to do that to which these terms are applied. I must intreat your patience," he cried, for he saw the Colonel raise a deprecating hand ; indeed, the gallant officer disliked this part of the subject exceedingly,— "I must intreat your patience while I explain, very shortly, all that passed between us yesterday after-

noon, when we parted. I do not require an answer, nor even an expression of your opinion; but out of respect to Ethel and myself, I have a right to demand that you hear me."

Edgar then, in that sharp, pointed diction so familiar to him, explained the history of his love for Ethel; showing, from circumstances which the Colonel himself must have remarked, how he rather avoided than courted her society, and accounting for this line of conduct, not by the avowal of his sense of inferiority in rank or fortune, but from an idea that her family must have formed other projects for her,—projects which it was his duty, out of gratitude to them for what they had done for Eva, not to thwart. When he found, however, that Ethel's heart was his,—his own, entirely his own—he appealed to the Colonel's sense of justice whether he had not a right to claim his own. Did the Colonel do otherwise in his case? Perhaps there was no parallel between the two; but the principle must be the same. And would Ethel, loving him as she did, have been a happy wife with another? The Colonel knew her—would she?

The Colonel begged he would not talk in that strain; that was the stuff that boys and girls talked: and when Markham had children of his own, it would make him just as angry to hear it, as it now gave him pleasure to talk it. He quite acquitted them both of indelicacy, and never meant to imply it, though he did allude at the time to the occurrence at the Hermitage gate. The real indelicacy on Ethel's part was her not acquainting her aunt at once. Falsehood! whether that charge was borne out or not, still it looked very like it on the face of things. "Here am I, knowing all this business for ten days; and my niece tells me this morning, that she could not mention it before, because it

was not arranged till yesterday afternoon. What would you have? Am I to be cool at a statement like that from a young girl who never knew a wish but that it was granted, and upon whom confidence was bestowed in such a manner, that now it has been betrayed we shall be made the laughing-stock of the county?" No doubt, all that Markham said explained it, and he knew well he was dealing with an honourable man; but if he might give his opinion, as he supposed he might, he disliked the match very much: it was contrary to every hope he looked for in his niece's behalf,—it was a bad match, as the world went; she ought to have something better,—and as for love, Markham understood human nature himself too well not to know that he and she, like others, would not die of that. And the gallant Colonel, at this juncture, walked to the window, to enjoy a prospect which he could not see.

Edgar let him go on in this way without interruption, for he had quite penetration enough to see that the Colonel had made up his mind most satisfactorily as to what he could not help. That he would have rather carried Ethel to the marriage market of the metropolis, if he could have smuggled her away sily that very day, was certain, but that having failed, he feared the exposure of what had happened, and the ridicule consequent upon it, far more than any other result. All this was quite clear to Edgar, and as he saw he had nothing to do but let him go on, he held his own tongue.

"But what is the use of my talking in this way?" said the Colonel testily, turning away from the window. "I have no consent to give; Ethel has gone to her other guardian. You have gained your object, Markham, in clearing yourself and her in respect to the expressions I have used. Let this interview close."

"I have told you that you have a consent to give, and that your consent is most necessary," said Edgar; "and although not a consent required by law, we cannot out of respect to you marry without it. My object in coming here to clear her in your eyes has been gained; but I am here,—must I go away with no more?"

The Colonel looked at him. He was rather pleased at the turn which things had taken: he would like now to have seen this disagreeable business on an amicable footing, for he could not bear to think of Ethel away from his house on a quarrel like this; but she had left it voluntarily, and voluntarily she must come back.

"Mr. Markham!" he said slowly; "my niece has left my house against my will. As long as she remains away from it, I shall give no opinion on her or your wishes. My wife and myself are her natural parents. She has committed a great breach of social and moral duty in the course she has pursued. Mind, I do not say that my consent will follow her return; I rather think not: but as long as she is away from this house, after the manner in which she has gone, I will not know of her existence."

Edgar was so angry at this speech, that he would not trust himself to answer. Considering where Ethel had gone,—to a guardian claiming equal right to her protection with the Colonel,—and why she had gone, namely, because this same Colonel had threatened to do that which at her dying father's bedside he had promised not to do,—considering, too, that the gallant officer had told him, Markham, a priest of the Church, some few falsehoods in the course of this present interview, he felt he could not trust himself to answer. He therefore rose, and said calmly and somewhat coldly, "Well, then, Colonel, let this interview end here."

And so it did end.

Some few minutes elapsed, while Edgar was standing in the vestibule waiting for his pony, the state of which one of the Newlands grooms had compassionated, and was attempting to mend in stables *not* close by, during which time he tried to calm his feelings, for he was sorely disappointed, and anxiety, fasting, and fatigue began to make him feel irritable. At last the animal came; and he was trotting slowly off, when the Colonel, having left the library by one of the sweeping French windows thereof, called to him, and crossing the turf, asked him, whether it would not be a comfort to Ethel to have Pansy with her; "Because, you know," he said, looking at the cart, "you might take her with you."

Edgar looked at the old gentleman's face, and saw he was relenting; but he could only trust himself to answer, "As you please," for he felt himself breaking down.

"Here, you Wilkins," said the Colonel to a groom, "inquire for Miss Miller, and request her to walk out here directly."

The request needed not to be repeated, for Pansy came flying out in a minute or two in a career of delight.

"Pansy," said the Colonel, "Mr. Markham is going over to the Hermitage, at least I suppose he is," he added with a half sly look, "and has room for you, if you would like to go to Ethel."

"Oh, Colonel Wreford! may I go?" said Pansy.

"Of course you may; but stay, as she was running off, "don't take many things with you. You can leave your boxes" (which had been already packed up for her journey) "here. Tell Chapman to put up the few things you may want, and they shall be sent over to-night: it will only be for a day or two."

Pansy ran away overjoyed at the future, which the Colonel's affability depicted to her mind.

"Now, Mr. Markham," said the Colonel, "will that do for you? Rouse up, man." He too was grieved to see how wretchedly ill the Curate looked.

Edgar smiled, for the last words had sounded like music to his ears. "Ethel will anxiously inquire the result of this meeting. She has been ill all the afternoon, Colonel. May I say that it was satisfactory in respect to both my objects?"

Colonel Wreford's heart swelled within him at the remembrance that his niece was suffering. He came up to the cart, and placing his hand on the splashboard said, "You may say, Markham, that it was most satisfactory both with regard to the past and to the future. Now you must be satisfied with that; whatever else happens must depend on Ethel herself."

"God bless you," said Edgar, from the bottom of his heart.

And at this juncture came Pansy bonneted and shawled, and looking quite a recovered Pansy. The Colonel banded her in, and the two drove off. For some minutes Pansy kept looking back, until Edgar asked her why she did it, not remembering himself anything particularly attractive in the place they had left; and Pansy thereupon explained that she was only waiting to see that they were not looking at her, in order that she might give him a special shake of the hand.

"And pray why?" he said, highly amused.

"Because it is all settled, is it not, Mr. Markham? You and Ethel are going to be married."

"I hope we are," said he seriously, "but nothing is settled. You may tell Ethel, however, for I suppose you will see her first, that the meeting between her uncle and myself was most satisfactory."

"Why, Mr. Markham," she interrupted, "which

way are you going? You'll drive right through Drellington."

"Just what I intend," he replied; "if they see you in the cart, they will see that it is all right, and that will stop them from coming to condole with Mrs. Wreford."

The idea was a good one. Drellington High Street was at most times not an exciting thoroughfare, and just now was thoroughly deserted. But the covert observation made up for the want of the overt, and Edgar knew well, that a score of pairs of eyes regarded them with astonishment as the cart passed on.

And now they have arrived at the Hermitage, and Pansy has flown upstairs to Ethel, and Edgar has thrown himself into a fauteuil alone in the drawing-room, to think and be at rest at last. How long did he think? How long did he find this rest? When he returned from thinking, it was to feel a dreamy sensation that something was wrong. He could just perceive that the room was altogether different from what it was when he first began to think. It was lighted, but not with the light of day, nor completely lighted by artificial light. Whatever light it was, was so shaded as to leave him quite in the dark. How was this? Oh ever cruel sensation of returning consciousness! I have been ill, and when, and how long, and what have I done in the meantime, and who has seen me? are the questions resuscitated nature always asks. But there is no time for answer; again nature flags, and the questions are forgotten. After awhile Edgar looks up once more, and this time finds close against his breast, something that to his thickened vision looks like a mop. With a feeling akin to disgust, he is about to repulse it, when it slowly rises up of its own accord, and by its "ah! better; hem! yes, hum!" proclaims itself to be a head be-

longing to old Doolittle. This is such a startling discovery, that Edgar's powers again flag, but a minute after he holds out his hand to show his gratitude, which however the doctor takes in quite another way, supposing it probably to be a sort of dumb interrogative as to the state of the patient's pulse, a proceeding which he answers with much solemnity, by holding the wrist for two minutes consecutively, and then letting it drop with a grunt.

Edgar is then made to drink teaspoonfuls of port wine at intervals of half minutes, and at these times he becomes aware that a female hand is administering them, and that it is not Mrs. Wilford, for she seems like the ghost in "Semiramide," looming in front a tremendous way off. Some one was behind him, and when the faintness returned again for a moment, two fair young hands held his head as it drooped, but they were not Ethel's,—he felt they were not—he hoped she was not in the room. What must she be suffering if she was there? The idea almost made him ill again. This fear was soon removed. Pansy's voice ("it was Pansy then that held his head,") said in a whisper. "Indeed, Aunt Wilford, I must go up. She promised me not to come down. But I am certain she overheard the servants say something, and if she finds out that it is Mr. Markham, nothing will keep her away." Edgar smiled, and felt inclined to go to sleep again. But renovated nature was exerting its sway, and a very short time after this, he was able to converse feebly with Mrs. Wilford and the doctor. The latter now increased the stimulant, and insisted that he should have some light food. So Mrs. Wilford promised, that out of compliment to her three visitors, a sort of little half tea, half dinner, should be prepared in the breakfast-room, although she was an old-fashioned old person, and

had her dinner at one o'clock. The doctor, who seemed wonderfully alive for him, promised to return in a quarter of an hour with some drops, which would set Markham quite right, "hum! ha!" but until then, he must not leave his chair, and must not be excited on any account. Edgar said that it was nothing, "he should be well shortly; he had eaten nothing since seven in the morning; he had got wet through at three, and he had been anxious since, but it would all pass off, and in an hour he could go home."

"Wet through! ha! hum!" said Doolittle. "Did you change? hum! Oh!" touching his linen, "I see you did! Lucky for you! you would have been dead without that. However, good-bye. I'll be back shortly, ha! hum!"

And then again returned that horrible faintness, and Edgar again for a very short time lost consciousness. On awaking once more, his left arm was round the neck of some one. She was kneeling beside him, and had placed it there. He opened his eyes once, and saw her, her, his Ethel, and his head drooped downwards. "Ethel," he could not whisper, but his lips moved the word, and to the sense of love, is not that enough?

From this moment he began to revive altogether. Doolittle arrived shortly with his drops, which Edgar said smelt like decayed fruit, but their effect was almost immediate, and Edgar thanked the old fellow in such well-chosen terms, that for once in his life, he did not regret losing about one third of a dinner, which was just then commencing at the house of old Warburton. He was however, to return at nine, and to accompany Edgar home, if necessary, for the latter would on no account stay at the Hermitage, although much pressed, until Ethel's difference with her uncle was made up.

This was a happy two hours from seven till nine

this same evening. The half-dinner, half-tea ! The soup and mutton chop prescribed, and to be taken without flinching by Edgar. The toast and jelly and confiture for Ethel and Pansy. And how happily they chatted afterwards. Mrs. Wilford doing something she called "tatting," Pansy winding cotton for no ostensible purpose, and Ethel sitting beside Edgar's chair, listening eagerly to every word he spoke. These were happy moments, perhaps as happy as any I shall have in this tale to relate.

In the course of the evening, Pansy brought Edgar a writing book, and he indited a letter to Lord Tramontane, giving him a very slight sketch of what had taken place, stating that he had been taken ill, but that the influence which the Earl had promised would be most acceptable, if he would put it in force to-morrow morning, calling on him, Edgar, at Holycross, for further information as he passed. This letter was forwarded at once to Mrs. Cundall's, and another express therefore, carried this time by one of the exceedingly unsound postmen, found its way the same night to Auster Park.

Doolittle returned, pronounced his patient well enough to return home alone, but enjoined him strictly not to leave his parsonage till he, the doctor, called on the following morning, which he promised to do as early as eight o'clock. And so a few smiles, one painless farewell, and Edgar and Sugarplum were crossing Uppershott Common.



CHAPTER XXIII.

SUNSHINE.

EDGAR's attack turned out to be much more serious than he had anticipated. The next morning found him weak, languid, prostrated, and hardly able to move; and Doolittle, who was with him by eight o'clock, gave him to understand that he would have to keep the house for a day or two, a sore punishment to him now, just as he was on the threshold of happiness. That worthy too, who had not left his patient when Lord Tramontane arrived, made the noble Earl acquainted with the circumstances of Gabriel Cooper's death, and of the thunderstorm, and of the fasting, and of the anxiety to which he attributed Edgar's state; and so the Earl, after comforting his young friend as well as he could, and after comparing in his own mind certain conduct which he followed himself some few years back with that which had actuated Edgar, he drove off to the Hermitage with the intention of carrying Ethel over to her uncle under his paternal wing, and of settling these matters in proper matrimonial order for the young couple.

Ethel and the old man had a most satisfactory little conference in the carriage to the high amusement of the former, and on their arrival at Newlands she ran at once off to her aunt's room, while the Earl

proceeded to open his business to "that Whig of a Colonel."

Whether the course pursued in the present instance was the wisest that could be adopted, is of no great consequence. Under the circumstances of Edgar's illness, there was really no help for it. But as it happened, there seemed a chance at first of its rather obstructing than tending to a favourable issue. Colonel Wreford, who since the occurrences of last night was every moment more and more inclined to be favourable to his niece's wishes, had set his mind on the hope that she would return to her home under Edgar's escort. The Earl's appearance therefore, coupled with very strong symptoms of an intention to interfere, rather excited the Colonel's wrath, and he received his noble visitor with most laughable *hauteur*.

The Earl, however, was a gentleman of the old school, polished, patient, acute, and a perfect master of the arts of persuasion. Without losing a moment he put in the history of Gabriel Cooper, which the Colonel at present knew nothing about, and which as completely extorted his admiration, as it had done his visitor's. He allowed in his heart how richly Edgar deserved to win, and how, if he had done as any one else would have done, he the Colonel, would have been more thoroughly foiled than he had been as it was. But in order not to let the Earl think that he had acted without reason and judgment in these transactions, he suddenly assumed a ground quite new to the Earl, and which probably would have been quite new to Edgar also, and which was in all likelihood quite new to the Colonel himself.

"Your Lordship must understand," he said, "that though I may be induced now to give my consent to a marriage which I cannot prevent, and that though in my own heart I may feel assured of

a reasonable chance of happiness to my niece in it, I consider myself to have had very grave reasons for doing all in my power to prevent it. To speak plainly I have foreseen, long foreseen, the probability of what has really taken place, though I was by no means prepared for the suddenness with which the affair became completed. I have, however, had time enough to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of such an occurrence,—and I tell you in so many words I did not like the match: my niece might have done better, not in the excellence and probity of the person she has chosen, though I am at a loss to see why there may not be many others of equal excellence in this respect, in all classes, but in the particular rank of life from which she has chosen. My niece, excuse my saying so in this presence, is fit for an earl,” (the Earl bowed and thought so too, indeed he would not have minded being the particular Earl in question.) “But there is one other consideration of a far higher kind which has guided me in this matter. Your Lordship may not know that my brother-in-law Edward Conway’s later life and last hours were embittered by the fear that his child would either become a Roman Catholic or fall into the hands of those who would lead her religious opinions to the next thing to it. It was with a caution against even the chance of this that I received his dying trust, the care and guardianship of his child. Now think of my feelings when, in giving my consent to this marriage, I know I am doing that which he would consider as consigning his child to the arms of a Roman Catholic Priest.”

“But my dear Colonel,” exclaimed the Earl, “if Conway had retained his brains as long as he retained his life, he must have known that the way to obviate that in any young man was to encourage his marriage.”

“I am speaking of the interest he had in his

daughter's religious welfare, and not of any, which he most assuredly would *not* have had in Mr. Markham's," said the Colonel haughtily, "but even then the principle is the same. My niece has a considerable fortune: in possession of it Mr. Markham has no particular call to follow his profession. What is to prevent him from throwing it up, and with his wife joining the communion of Rome? That would have been Edward Conway's dread, and am not I bound to respect it?"

"Must I say, Colonel, what is to prevent him from following such a course?" said Lord Tramontane; "I think you know full well,—namely, that he has no more a tendency to the Roman persuasion than you or I."

"I know," returned the Colonel, "that he is on the same road which others traversed before him, who went as far: and as her father's representative I cannot be blind to that. However, let this discussion end. My niece is of age and has a right to choose for herself. I fulfilled my trust till it expired. *Du reste* Markham is honourable and good, and except for this reason I could not wish a better husband for my child,—as child she has been to me," he concluded with some emotion.

At this moment a tap was heard at the door, and, in less time than it takes to write it, Ethel was in her uncle's arms. And the old Earl looked on, and, despite the cataract and the wrinkles, felt himself, as he thought, young again. But, as before, it was a mistake, a foolish illusion.

All that the Colonel advanced in this conversation the reader knows, as well as we, to have been perfectly untrue. Although he, like the rest of the world, might have been, with some advantage to himself, better instructed in his religious duties, yet no one knew better than he, that a Tractarian was among the last to become a Roman

Catholic. Why then, you will say, did he descend to such a meanness as this line of defence implied? The answer is: these are the days of "civil and religious liberty," and a little untruth to gain an end now and then does not meet with that reprobation, which among the great and wise one would hope for. The Colonel had been beaten at the game he played, and had been quite willing to take his beating with complacency, until the Earl stepped in, when he thought it was due to himself to take up a virtuous ground, and to seize every means of defence which surrounding circumstances brought ready to his hand.

The Colonel was to leave that afternoon for town; for though the Easter recess commenced only two days subsequently, an important motion was expected to come on in the house that night, at which his presence had been promised. Desirous, however, of showing his good will to, and sympathy for, Edgar, he ordered his carriage an hour before it was necessary, and passed that time with him in a visit to Holycross on his road to Gramford. Here all the little clouds which had obscured the horizon of the young people's happiness passed away. The Colonel freely laughed at the manner he had been beaten, and allowed that with such an adversary he richly deserved it.

During this visit too Edgar made him acquainted with all his early life and disappointments, and with his present relations with the Boxholme party, and with Letitia, &c. At this visit also the Colonel became acquainted with his future nephew-in-law's pecuniary concerns, which he did not think so bad after all. His own fortune inherited from his mother, joined to Eva's share which she had left him, amounted to £350 per annum, and his curacy was worth £100 more; so that the Colonel thought that with Ethel's fortune, he would be rich enough

for a beginning, as times go. In spite of the impatience produced by his being kept away from Ethel's side, Edgar felt this afternoon full of consolation, and ascribed it to the right source, and blessed the Author and Giver of it from his inmost heart as well as with his lips.

About the time the marriage was to take place, the Colonel was much perplexed; he had taken this house in town, and he must live in it. But the wedding must be at Newlands,—that was due to Drellington: and that must be at a time when he could leave town. He had mentioned it to his wife and niece, and told them to settle about it. Somewhere about Whitsuntide he thought. This was music to Edgar's ears. His family could then leave for town, and the repairs could take place at Newlands during the summer. There was nothing of any consequence to be done to the Parsonage in Holycross, as they were not to stay here permanently; and as for the settlements, he would see his lawyer about them to-morrow, and have them put in hand forthwith.

Despite all these smiles of fortune, however, it was very provoking to have to keep the house for some days. Pansy who came down as usual on this Wednesday night, to the organ ostensibly, though incited violently by Ethel in reality to obtain a personal interview with the Curate, reported that her efforts were ineffectual, and that Mr. Christopher did the service instead in a very uncertain and tremulous fashion.

Ethel, you may be sure, was not going to let her existence be forgotten, and all the forcing-houses and farmyards at Newlands were despoiled to find delicacies for the invalid. But on the question of his being allowed to go to Newlands, or of any of the Newlands party to be allowed access to him at Holycross, old Doolittle was inexorable. He said

that the greatest tranquillity was necessary for Markham: that he must not run the very smallest chance of being excited, whether on the score of pleasure or pain. Acquiescence, though a very discontented acquiescence, was yielded to this during the Wednesday and Thursday. But on the Friday the patient showed such a rebellious spirit, and evinced so much disquietude at his state of confinement, that Doolittle, thinking he would excite himself on this score, and perhaps fearing lest he himself should be sacrificed on the hearth at Newlands unless he made some concession, promised that if he would only remain quiet in the house one more day, Mrs. Wreford and Ethel should come and see him on the following morning.

And so about ten o'clock on Saturday these two found themselves in the drawing-room of Holy-cross Parsonage. Edgar had breakfasted in his room, but would be down in a few minutes, Mrs. Stacey said with a decrepit curtsy to Ethel, suggestive of her future retention in the household.

"Aunt, look what a number of letters he has got," said Ethel, taking them up one by one very inquisitively. Drellington letters were usually delivered by eight, it should be said, but it was considered good for the health of the Holycross bag by the post-office authorities that it should take a slight *detour* in the morning air of about ten miles round before it was delivered at its destination. "And aunt, I'll declare, here is a lady's hand! who can it be?"

"Why, Ethel, you are not married yet: do put those letters down," said Mrs. Wreford.

"But just see, aunt. Here is a parcel so carefully sealed, and a small box: I am certain that box is for me," cried the young girl, peeping round every well secured fold of the paper which enveloped it.

"Now, Ethel! what a baby you are; do not be so enthusiastic; you will be disappointed."

"Aunt, there is no good your talking about it," said Ethel; "I am sure the square parcel is for me—not the box perhaps, but the parcel"—and the young girl certainly believed it.

"I wish you would be quiet, Ethel," said her aunt; "what will Mr. Markham think of us, if he comes in and catches you meddling with his papers?"

"He will not object, aunt Georgy," said Ethel laughing in that low soft way peculiar to herself.

Aunt Georgy, however, certainly felt herself scandalised, for she had a certain sort of awe of the Curate; besides, it must be remembered that he was not in love with her; and she would probably have resorted to some earnest remonstrance with her niece, had not Markham presented himself at this juncture. Ethel was near the door, but with her back to it; the moment she heard his footstep, she turned, and one quiet pressure of the hand passed between them.

"Well, Edgar!" said Mrs. Wreford, "you do look well. Your complexion is as clear as Ethel's. Why! you have become quite interesting."

"Thank you, Aunt Georgy," said Edgar with mock solemnity; and the two laughed with pleasure at the terms which expressed their mutual recognition of future relationship.

"He does *not* look well, aunt," said Ethel, scanning his features with tender anxiety. And then as he turned and looked fondly upon her—"Yes, now he does—you are sure you are better, Edgar—are you sure?"

"Ethel! if happiness can make a man well, I should be the most robust of beings. I am in perfect health, only your friend Dr. Doo-nothing,—is not that his name?—will have it that I am not.

But now you are here,—as I have not seen a soul for four days,—do let me feast upon all the nice things you have to tell me. Mrs. Wreford is full of every saying that is agreeable, I can see by her face.”

“Never mind aunt,” said Ethel, “she only came to look on; sit down here”—she continued pulling him on to the sofa—“now you must read your letters,” and she gathered them up in her lap, and gave them to him one by one. Mrs. Wreford gazed on her half with pleasure, half with pain, the former to see her so happy, the latter at conjecturing the result, if the Colonel’s original plan had succeeded. But Edgar’s system of reading his letters was very different to what Ethel fancied. He took them from her, threw them aside without opening them, all except one, the seal of which he broke, read it, showed some slight sign in his countenance of displeasure, and threw it into the fire. He then took hold of the parcel and the box, and, drawing out a penknife, commenced cutting the strings which secured the former.

“Edgar!” said Ethel, “I am sure that parcel is for me.”

“Certainly,” he said, with a laugh, “so is everything in this house, that does not belong to the Rev. Thompson Beaumont.”

“No, but this parcel is especially for me?”

“Dear Ethel,” he said, taking both her hands in his, “they are both—the parcel and the box—for you, if they meet the orders I gave respecting them. If not, they go back again. This,” touching the parcel, “I ordered the day after Coleman died, and I have never been able to get it correct yet.”

The parcel was opened, and disclosed one of those gems of books for public worship which will be found at some booksellers, though even among them it would have been peculiar. It was what booksellers call heavily tooled and bevelled, but with no gilt ex-

cept in the cross on the exterior, which was of the primitive pattern. The volume, considering what it contained, was exceedingly small. Its contents were, the Holy Bible, *including the Apocrypha*, and the Prayer Book separate; not one of those mangled productions of Holy Scripture called *Church Services*, which seem introduced for the purpose of saving young people the trouble of searching those Scriptures themselves, but a Bible and a Prayer Book separate, and at the same time in one; the print, of course, rather small,—for the volume was such as a young lady could with ease carry with her to church—but exceedingly clear and distinct. The smallness of its size resulted, probably, from the thinness of the paper.

Ethel and Mrs. Wreford were examining this book, while Edgar unrolled a small packet, enclosed in the same parcel, containing the markers he had ordered for it. They were five in number, of strong violet-coloured silk, and the pendants consisted of oval open-worked monograms in red gold, each surrounded at the exterior edge with a thin band of bright gold to hold them together. Ethel's attention was immediately attracted to them, and she loudly evinced her delight. But Mrs. Wreford's attention was riveted on the book, and she at last called out—

"Well, Edgar, you are incomprehensible. I should say that you had put the cart before the horse, but you have, of course, a reason, and I cannot divine what it is."

"What is the matter," he said, much pleased with her perplexity.

"You know as well as I," she replied, "you are going to give Ethel a book containing the Church Services."

"No, excuse me, the Bible and the Prayer Book together."

"Well, the Bible and the Prayer Book together; and you have reversed the order in which these things are generally compiled, and put the Bible first."

"I have," he said, "and for this reason. The Bible is the Word of God. The Prayer Book is its exponent to a certain point. Would you have that which explains presented to our minds before that which it has to explain from?"

"You are a very extraordinary person. You seem to have a reason for everything which defies that to which we are wedded by use."

"Use becomes abuse in religion, if not properly directed," said Markham.

"I think, nevertheless, I can find you at fault," she said, cunningly.

"Do not frighten me," he replied.

"Yes, Edgar, I will frighten you if I can: I think you are admirable in your way, but like all Clergymen who delight in extremes, you defeat yourselves; and in these very externals I can expose you—only you."

"Well, that is consoling, if it is only me, because the body of us who delight in externals will not suffer from my defalcation," he replied, looking so placid that it positively put her in a passion.

"Now, Edgar, the question I am going to ask you is one I have asked of myself from the first Sunday you preached at Drellington. I have asked it also from Clergymen at Scarborough; I have asked it also at Gramford, and the only answer I can get is—carelessness."

"On my part?" said Markham, blushing: for he began to think he had done something wrong.

"On your part, Edgar," said Mrs. Wreford, fondly: for she, now that the match was made up, had commenced loving him with all her heart. "In no church in the kingdom, high or low, is that done

which you do. I think nothing of it; but you, who are such a stickler for the externals of religion, ought to be tried by your own standard."

"Well, now, aunt Georgy, after that long sermon will you tell me my fault?" said Edgar, who had recovered his complacency.

"How is it, Edgar," said Mrs. Wreford, "that on entering the reading-desk you wear no bands, but in the pulpit you carry them always?"

"Is that my fault?"

"I see by your face that you have a reason."

"Is that my fault?"

"Yes!"

"Did not the very regularity in the commission of the offence show you that there was a reason?"

"It did make me think that there was a reason, but I compared you with other Clergymen, even of the High Church party, and I saw them wear their bands where you did not; and, Edgar, they were men of higher note than you."

"Were they?" said he. "Then they were forgetful. It certainly does not seem a matter of any great importance; and were it the *only* piece of inattention among the inattentions of the Clergy, would not be entitled to remark. But as you say, Mrs. Wreford, I do nothing without a reason. The bands are a part of the Academical costume of a Clergyman, and, indeed, of any layman who, having graduated at the Universities, has an equal right to the dress. They should, therefore be worn in the pulpit, if he wears there his academical costume, but on *no* other occasion. In the reading-desk and at the altar, he wears the ecclesiastical robes, and the bands form no part of them."

"Really you attach too much importance to these forms."

"Mrs. Wreford," said Edgar, "can he who neglects little matters in teaching, expect his flock to

acquire great matters in learning. I grant that this is of itself almost unimportant, and I do not say that I should attach any blame to one of my brethren who omitted to observe it. But if the bands mean nothing, why wear them at all?"

"I think you are wrong," said the lady.

"How?"

"Not only in this, but in other respects; wrong in frightening people by forms which are to them as idolatry, if I must say the word."

"That is," said Markham, "that a Priest of the Church who is sent to teach, is to give in to superstition on their part, to their worshipping a *fancy*: an *ignorance*, which is the worst idolatry. I am not to instruct them—not to tell them that there is a meaning in everything which the Church does, not to inform them, as I do you, that the antidote to idol-worship is, to teach the emptiness of the idol itself. Be assured, Mrs. Wreford, of one thing: mankind must worship something, either a spirit or an image. Revelation gives the former, in its triune form; the latter it will make of itself, not necessarily graven, but so completely formed, that by mental action it can grasp its every part. The business of the Church's Priests is, to teach, explain, and strengthen the former; and its hundred forms which give now so much offence, are but appliances to teach the soul by attracting the senses. This, perhaps, is most startling to a liberal age; liberal only—ah me!—liberal only because the Church has been asleep, and true religion has well-nigh died out."

"Edgar, dear Edgar, you are becoming excited. Oh! Aunt, don't talk again. Look how flushed he is!" said Ethel, in alarm.

"No, Ethel *ma bien aimée*," said he, mournfully, "no conversation of this sort can do CHRIST's soldier harm."

But this interview had to end. Ethel, with her heart in a flutter—her mind in a dream—returned home with her aunt, to dream still more.

Drellington, not always remarkable for its rapidity of comprehension, was somewhat unprepared for the celerity with which these changes were forced upon its intellectual vision. In an unexampled shortness of time, it had to realise the engagement, the Colonel's projects, the flight, the explanation, and now the prosperous *dénouement*. Really, events succeeded each other so rapidly, that not Miss Piminy—not the gossips of the place—not even the inventive Pander—had time to enlarge upon them as they deserved. Indeed, as they took place respectively, and presented by turns the respective phases of a prosperous or an adverse issue, adventurous spirits had, in addition to divers wagers, indulged in statements so utterly unwarranted by truth, and so completely at variance with the event next succeeding, that nothing but ingenuity of the highest order could ever have restored their position in the world for veracity, excepting, perhaps, the excited state of society in general, which made them rather careless to outward inaccuracies.

However, Drellington at length comprehended all these changes, and of course was mightily delighted at the issue of events.

The Vicar was among the first to congratulate the young couple. He did it well. One might have thought him the most open-hearted of individuals—that is, if one did not know him. However, he was no more insincere than many others, for all were more or less hearty in the same way on the subject. In a week the place was quite accustomed to see Ethel's graceful figure leaning on Edgar's arm; and all the fears and hopes of a few days before were now summed up in the bright smile of that sweet young face.

The Wednesday in Whitsun week had been fixed on for the nuptials. It being the Parliamentary recess, made that date most convenient for the Colonel, and he could then leave Newlands to peace and its repairs in comfort. The service was to be a choral service, the Gramford choir being engaged for the occasion. Edgar had stipulated for this, and it is needless to say that the Vicar had raised no obstacles.

It seemed but the natural issue to all Ethel's hopes, that their accomplishment should be celebrated in the manner towards which all the aspirations of her youth had tended.

"Gramford choir!" she thought; and then, in the midst of all this happiness, came that painful melancholy dream of her youth, the spires of Gramford Minster, and the fancied choristers, and the dreamy Ambrosian chants, never heard, but yet so often ringing in her ears. And then came her mother's smile, as she had watched it in her portrait, and the star above; and then all these thoughts evaporated in a joyful gush of tears—the outpourings of her young and grateful heart.



CHAPTER XXIV.

IDOLATRY.

WE cannot dwell on such pleasant scenes as the last chapter contains; to be natural they must be such as happiness of this life is meant to be. Mere gleams of sunshine, to encourage the wanderer on a dry and dusty path—no more!—and so we must make them short, and few, and far between.

The forty days in which the Church in old time passed its sojourn in the wilderness¹ were over, the day of expectation was at hand. Holy Pentecost was coming,—the festival of the Giver of light and life. Oh! happy, happy Whitsuntide, with its fair altar-cloth, its glittering chalice,—the sun of May reflecting on them the glad faces, that come to use them, and that welcome feast, welcome to all who come without excuse. These are the days of green garlands, and rosy faces, and white dresses, representing what the soul should be within!

Wednesday,—*the* Wednesday is here. Who is there possessed of the pen to describe such a day? No St. George's, Hanover Square, with its blackened edifice, its back streets, its footmen pinning on white favours outside, and refreshing themselves from alternate pots of porter, while a knot is being

¹ "The Great Forty Days." Newland's Seasons of the Church, vol. ii., p. 217.

tied within. Edgar knows what the ceremony of marriage means,—knows what the season means,—and to those who cannot partake of the internal blessedness, which is his lot, the external show is so arranged as to teach a lesson.

Look at those Callington girls, born near the old house at Mervyn, all to be confirmed next week, from Ethel's gentle teaching,—May blossoms with its hawthorn green, the symbol of young purity round their heads,—lilies of the valley plucked that morning, and in tiny bouquets hanging round their wrists. This time the organ at Drellington too wakes responsive notes in every Drellington heart; the organist of Gramford Minster touches it, the surpliced choir of Gramford Minster chant those prayerful words, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and show us the light of His countenance, and be merciful unto us."

Let Ethel tell as well;—that slight figure, answering in every movement to the suggestions of her pure and spotless heart. The full black hair drawn off her pale serious face, and in a fanciful way corded up behind with orange flower. The veil of Brussels lace, Lady Tramontane's present, not hung from behind the head, but thrown right over her, so as to shroud her person from head to foot. Her responses soft, low, musical, but distinct in their very whisper. Was not this a lesson? Her bridesmaids' tears not the morbid sentimental tears of most bridesmaids, who weep because they pretend to think the ceremony very terrible, but tears of joy to think that Ethel was to be so happy. Did not these convey a lesson? And yet these are but externals,—outward signs of the good pure hearts that beat within.

The bridesmaids were four in number. Emma Gascoigne, the quiet one; (Henrietta, surnamed Harry, had refused, on the ground that it would

break her heart to see anything so solemn, although she did manage to survey it from one of the offensive galleries;) Angelica Wreford, Pansy, and Miss Georgiana Nelthorpe. Lady Nelthorpe was also present, in company with a large smelling bottle, about as useless as herself. The service was rendered by the Bishop of the diocese, for the Colonel was determined to do the thing well, as the saying is, and the Vicar of the parish had nothing to do but to look comfortable, which he did to perfection, and to speculate on the creature comforts which Gunter was at this moment superintending in the mansion at Newlands, and at which he and Pander, of the distended eyes, both purposed shortly to ply a very respectable knife and fork. Warburton, the big attorney, whom one would have thought as dry and methodistical as the desk on which he ordinarily wrote his legal fulminations, never having been present at a choral service in his life before, blubbered like a great school boy, and so little understood its meaning as to declare that it put him in mind of his mother's funeral, which having been conducted on a rainy day in November by the Vicar, who inadvertently missed half the service in consequence of the wind blowing over the leaves of the Prayer Book, and the rain keeping them stuck there, must have been a very striking and festive ceremony indeed.

Nevertheless it was a day of happiness even to others than the couple whom it most concerned. If ever a church was fitted up to make one melancholy, (mind, I speak only of the fittings, for the building planned and carried out by people who knew how to appreciate the "beauty of holiness" had no harm in it,) if ever a church, I say, was calculated to make one melancholy, Drellington parish church, with its decrepit pews, its broken altar-rails, its chancel windows blocked up by man-

dacious monuments in memory of bad churchmen, its dust, its green baize, its staring startlingness of apathetic routine, evidenced by the minutest peculiarity in the clergyman, clerk, and edifice, it was that one particular church. But the day *would* be a happy one. It *would* take no denial! Through as much of the old stained glass as modern vandalism had not destroyed it shone in kaleidoscope colours; now fashioning itself in some grotesque form on a white garment, now catching some village belle's eye, now sporting with the complexion of a bridesmaid and making her look a blue-green-red, and something else; but still it was always there and always dancing,—perhaps in propitious acknowledgment of the occasion. The girls, too, *would* laugh. The birds *would* sing. Nobody looked really sorrowful; not even Warburton, (because his tears were only spasmodic, and his daughters not being afflicted in the same way on the score of their mother's memory, were screaming at him the whole time.) If ever there was a bright wedding on this earth, with bright prospects, good wishes, true love, it was this marriage of Edgar Markham and Ethel Conway; and it was crowned as all weddings ought to be, by the offering of the Holy Eucharist.

And at last she was on his arm going down the lime walk from the church to the carriage. He felt ill with happiness. He half feared that that dreadful faintness, which he had never known before the night when he was assured that Ethel was his own, was going to return. And in the midst of this he saw old Doolittle's grey and somewhat bloodshot eye looking intently at him. But he mastered his weakness by a great effort; he would be happy too.

"Edgar," said Ethel, in a whisper, as he placed her in the carriage, "I am your's now."

“Always together,” he replied; “always together, Ethel!”

* * * * *

Were they not happy? Who can tell? The world? Ah! no: though doubtless after its standard they must have been most so. No.—Happiness is not intended for this world, and if they were so it must have been,—nay, one ought not even to say that.

And herein is the application of the text which prefaces this history to the history itself—“It is written, thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” Eva had said to Ethel, “Never love; or if you love, love the object with relation to the Giver, not with relation to the gift.” Ethel had not followed this advice; nor Edgar more. Ethel loved Edgar with all the force of her young trusting heart, all the more warm, because innocent. Edgar loved Ethel with——. Well, it need not to say more—they each loved the other better than God.

Oh! sisters of England! lay this to heart. It is a hard saying, and one that will give much reproach. “But you must not worship the man you love.” Oh! my brothers in the storms and shipwrecks of affection, through the waves of which I have buffeted with such a fainting disheartened spirit, love not too much the wife of your bosom! And you, especially, priests of the Most High God! give not your whole heart to any save Him whose representatives you are.

It was once upon a time a wonder to me that so many love-matches turned out unhappily, and I will call upon the information of all my readers to say, whether the same has not almost invariably occurred in their experience,—how could it be said, I thought, that those who loved with all their life,

their strength, their heart, their soul, should meet with domestic sorrows, when those who began with mere esteem have been accustomed to happiness for a quarter of a century.

I know the reason now!

Those who love on earth must love with reason; those who love in heaven must never reason. Place your affections above, and love with all your might and soul. Never reason; for the subject of your love is beyond the range of human reason: reason only here on earth, on the things which are of the earth, and love them only in reason, for they shall all perish.

Is there not a moth,—is there not rust even in the affections, which we bear to the dear ones of this life? ALL our aspirations *must* rust if not kept clean by the bright contact of Gospel teaching. If we give them altogether to other than the things in heaven, will not the arch thief Satan break in and steal, and apply them to those things which belong to hell?

Whether old Doolittle was of this opinion I will not venture to say, but it is certain that he had considerable doubts of the happy results of the ceremony at which and after which he had played a distinguished part; for while discussing a bottle of port the same evening with which the Vicar in his unbounded hospitality would dose his guest, though they had both had quite as much wine as was good for them at the wedding breakfast, he remarked in his usual desultory fashion, "I think, Vicar, I could have said a word which would have stopped that match."

"Then why on earth did not you?" exclaimed the Vicar, his whole throat swelling with curiosity.

"Because," said old Doolittle, but seeing the Vicar's inquisitive gaze he suddenly recollected himself, "because I esteem them both—ha! hum!

—and I would not injure either for all I possess.”

“That’s not true,” thought the Vicar. “I wonder what this man knows. Markham can hardly have committed forgery, and Doolittle got the bill. Take another glass of wine, Doctor,” he said aloud.

“You are very good,” said the medical man; and he did take another, and several other glasses. But he was on his guard now, and perceived the mistake he had almost made, and did not enlighten the Vicar further.



CHAPTER XXV.

A CATASTROPHE.

THE young couple spent their honeymoon at a little place in Yorkshire, which had in days of yore belonged to Ethel's grandfather, and which the trustees of the present baronet, who was a minor, placed at their disposal. They stayed there however only for one fortnight. Edgar wished to let Ethel see some part of the Continent, and the two broke up those fourteen days of tranquillity—idolatry, alas! too—and spent three weeks in Belgium, country of his sorrow and early exile, now destined to leave an imperishable halo round the few short hours left unto him on this earth.

After this the two were to spend one week at Boxholme. Mrs. Robert Markham had, with the keen eye of self-aggrandisement, beheld, that if her hopes of connexion had been baulked in her own marriage, they might easily be mended by her attention to the results of her brother-in-law's; and by way of carrying out this object, she set to work to show her amusement at Letitia and Mary's former scruples about their brother, declaring to her husband, that she did not wonder at all at their being jealous of him, "because you know, my dear, that nobody who sees you all together would believe that you were born in the same rank of life as he." Edgar and Ethel were therefore rather made much

of at Boxholme. Letitia was there with her children; and to hear her talk, you would have supposed that he had been the darling brother of her youth. To Ethel, who now knew her husband's every thought, this hypocrisy was most revolting; and nothing but the gentle diffidence of her own nature and training, could have prevented her from expressing it. She comforted herself, however, when alone with him, by the thought that by this most complete estrangement in heart from his brothers and sisters, he had become all the more entirely her own.

In the whole compilation of the annals of love matches, I certainly never knew a case which according to human calculation, promised so much happiness as that of Ethel and Edgar. They had both the substratum of religion to support them. They both thought alike in their views on the most necessary part of human welfare. She loved him with awe at all he had suffered, and at the lessons which his sufferings had taught him. He cherished her for that inherent purity which God had planted in her nature, and which, now that they were one, unfolded itself in every little thought and whisper of her unblemished life. The love that existed between them was accompanied on both sides with a feeling of admiration at the excellencies the other displayed. If Edgar was writing or reading, Ethel would gaze and gaze at him, and wonder to herself that no one on the earth she had ever met could display such goodness as his soft, tranquil look, the sometimes serious shade, now the bright expression lighting him up, and then, as he would turn and greet her gaze with the sweet fascinating smile at times so like Eva's smile, she would feel almost astonished at her own happiness.

Oh! there was happiness here if ever human combinations promised happiness; and no doubt such

would have been, but—but—on this earth it is not to be. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." Dread earthly joy, my friend; you cannot deserve it if it comes: dread it, but use it to the glory of the Giver, if it must be yours; still dread, lest you be tempted to misapply it.

It was the third morning after their arrival at Boxholme; breakfast had concluded. Edgar had complained of being somewhat indisposed when he got up, but he had expressed no feeling likely to excite alarm. The astonishment of every one was therefore considerable, when a housemaid in some perturbation entered the breakfast-room, and said that Mr. Markham, she thought, must be ill, for he was sitting all stupid-like in his room upstairs, and did not answer when he was spoken to. Ethel was at the moment playing with one of Letitia's children, without even an idea that Edgar had left the room for any reason other than a fancy of his own. Even now, at the housemaid's announcement, she feared nothing. It just struck her that her husband might not be well, but she had Doolittle's drops, the electric effect of which had been shown on a former occasion, and she feared no evil.

But on entering the room where Edgar was sitting, with his head partly drooping, his hand convulsively clutching the side of the chair, a fearful chill fell on her heart: "Edgar!" she cried, in a sort of inarticulated whisper, throwing herself on her knees beside him, and looking on with a gaze of frantic dismay, "Edgar!"

It was of no use: Edgar hardly showed signs of consciousness. Messages were sent for medical men, such as could be got, and Doolittle's drops were forced down the patient's throat. These seemed somewhat to revive him. He raised his head for a time, and looked with a sad smile upon his young wife, a smile that she devoured with all

the blue of her peerless eyes ; but he did not speak, and in a few moments his head drooped again. A doctor arrived from Aylesbury, but at the very first moment he saw him he shook his head. "Stimulants were the only chance," he said, and stimulants were given, which for the moment seemed to produce some effect ; for, as before, he raised his head partly and smiled that sad smile, and pressed Ethel's hand, and then his head drooped again.

And so he remained until one o'clock, when Sir Henry H——, the eminent physician, who had been telegraphed from town, arrived. That able man did all that able physicians do in a hopeless case. He cleared the room of all but Ethel, Robert Markham, and himself ; he listened attentively to the beating of the dying man's heart, and to symptoms which could produce no other judgment than his one first sight had already formed. He did all he could to comfort the young girl, whose fixed, despairing look told the grief that was to come ; but he could not save ! The fiat had gone forth : the patient was past hope.

Edgar died at about three, having first roused sufficiently to whisper, "Ethel," and to smile, and to place his head on that cherished bosom.

Hard is the task of the historian who has to tell what ensued. Fountains of the heart which never dry, why did your springs ever flow at all ? Evergreens which never fade, rather envy your fellows which show that by their decay they are able to forget ! Rays of the Sun of Glory, which drink up into yourselves all that is good upon the earth, perchance you drew him mercifully away from that evil to come which his blind idolatry might have brought upon him.

Edgar died of long-standing disease of the heart, a complaint insidious in its action, and one which

too often during years of progress never tells of its existence.

Ethel was as one stunned after the event. Sir Henry H—— recommended that she should be let alone; over-sympathy, he said, would only aggravate the shock which it was clear was now striking too hardly. She remained for some time with the dead man's head on her bosom, because those around were literally afraid to draw her away, from the dread of some great convulsion.

But it became necessary at length to separate her from this last comfort. She obeyed the call as if aware that of herself she was unable to have a right idea of action, and because obedience in her was a second nature. Seated in a chair, a shivering fit at first seized her, which lasted so long that Sir Henry H—— ordered a fire to be lighted in the room, although it was in the middle of June, and outside the weather would have been considered hot. This past, she took to rocking herself in her chair, and singing in a low sort of moan the Gregorian tone, to which the choral part of her wedding service had been chanted. The Boxholme family regarded her with a kind of dismay, and repeatedly asked the doctor whether she was not going out of her mind; except Letitia, who kept bawling in her ears, that she ought to "rouse herself," just as she had done in Edgar's, both before he died and afterwards. But the physician only replied, that it was a nervous attack, that a composing draught might be given her at night, but that with a mind constituted like her's, everything which would tend to irritate, interference especially, (and he looked at Letitia) should be avoided. He had pressed upon them the necessity of sending for her uncle and aunt, or for some of the early friends of her youth, and telegraphic messages had at once been forwarded to the Wre-

fords and to Mrs. Wilford, but by the time Aunt Georgy arrived, Ethel had been induced to go to bed, and was now in a dead sleep, almost as profound as that of him who was sleeping in the room hard by.

Poor Aunt Georgy! Her feelings were inexpressible. Her niece had been to her as a child, almost a first-born, for when Ethel first came to her, Angelica her eldest, was but a little thing. Ethel had grown up, her brother's legacy, and as her beauties expanded, a legacy that paid the legatee more than the original treasure could be calculated to be worth. Though following her husband's calculations for the marriage of her niece, she had welcomed like him the day which made Ethel and Edgar so happy. She had acknowledged her own short-sightedness in dreaming that she could have been happy with any other than the love of her own innocent impartial choice. And now this love just acquired, but partially enjoyed, was called rudely away! A glass of liquid to a thirsty soul may be withdrawn at the moment the lips touch it, but if once tasted, once quaffed in its delicious sweetness, shall it be torn away? or if torn away, shall not the soul faint?

So thought Aunt Georgy, as at midnight she surveyed Ethel's face and form sleeping in a hard sterterous slumber. "When will she wake?" thought she, "when shall I be able to comfort her?" Aunt Georgy had seen Edgar's dead figure, had kissed his pale lips, and even indulged some passionate grief over him, notwithstanding that Letitia had come in here too with her favourite advice, "Rouse yourself." Aunt Georgy had beheld with dismay, the helplessness of this family. No master to direct, no mistress to instruct, no messenger of CHRIST to console. "If my child," she thought, "awakes, CHRIST must be with her,

but who in her grief is the *authorised* priest of His Church to say, 'Peace, My peace be with you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' " Only the Church's priests can say this, and Aunt Georgy had learnt this truth from Edgar.

"When will she wake?"

Ah! this was a question destined to attend a long answer!

Ethel slept for six-and-twenty hours, and when she did wake at nine at night, Aunt Georgy was well nigh worn out with trouble and watching. But the gleam of those blue eyes was enough to overjoy her. "Ethel, darling; Ethel, dearest, you are better!"

"No, aunty, not better yet," said Ethel, looking anxiously round the room.

"What is it, Ethel, my child?"

"You know what it is, aunty," returned the young girl. "Where is he—he—aunty—mine—my Edgar?" and she began to cry.

While she spoke, she kept looking at everything in the room, at the curtains of the bed, at the fire-irons, at the hem of her aunt's garment, at the shape of the window blinds, and at the flame even of the candle, and all the time with a painful inquisitiveness that would have brought tears to the eyes of the most insensible.

Mrs. Wreford looked at her, wondering whether she was deranged or not. But Ethel did not seem so. She spoke rationally on other subjects, still always nevertheless looking—looking—looking—at everything and at nothing, as the saying is, apparently without a reason.

And so the night passed on. Ethel looking, searching, seeking. Aunt Georgy watching, tired herself with dread of the future, and compassionate sympathy for the past, almost unto death.

It was summer time, and the crevices of the

shutters hitherto studiously closed for Ethel's comfort, disclosed light at three in the morning. On the morning following this day of dead sleep, she got so restless at the stealthy appearances of light, that her aunt petting her, fondly suggested that the whole gleam of the morning light should be let in. Ethel had not been to bed the previous night. Mrs. Wreford, considering her long sleep of the preceding day, had thought it unnecessary to press her to do so, and fancying the advent of light might bring a corresponding advent of life, pressed this on her.

But Ethel kept saying, "wait," eagerly regarding the chinks of light all the while. "Aunt Georgy, wait." And she looked again.

At last the sun rose, and at a look from Ethel, Mrs. Wreford threw open the shutter. With one wild cry, the young girl threw herself on her knees, and exclaimed, "My Edgar! my Edgar!"

Yes! so it was. Just as on the night of Coleman's death, she had inquired of Edgar, whether he ever felt Eva's presence with him; just as on that night, she had explained the invincible conviction in her mind, that her mother and Eva were shining in those two stars; just as he had told her, that he felt Eva's presence behind Ethel at Coleman's bedside, had she searched for him after he left her in his mortal figure. In the shape of the bed linen, in the flame of the candle, in the flicker of the expiring coals, in everything tangible or fanciful, had Ethel searched for him, for Edgar; and at last, according to the action of her diseased brain, if you think so, did she find him in the first gleam of that June sunshine.

"Edgar, my Edgar."

He was present after this. She never cried much from this moment, but was quieter, and she complained not. Once only, and at the close, she

burst into a fit of passionate weeping, and the doctors said that it might have saved her life had it been encouraged; but after this, she sunk into a state of despondent sobbing, from which she never rallied. She asked Aunt Georgy to look after Pansy, to give her a little, little more money, for her sake, and to tell her that she died, calling on her name, her pretty, fresh-blooming, never-fading sister Pansy, and that Pansy must be near her grave at Holycross. "Holycross! Aunt Georgy, where Edgar and Eva, and poor little Ethel shall lie. And our spirits will come and float over the graves, and see the flowers which she is sure to put there, and which you, Aunt Georgy, will send from the Newlands hot beds."

Ethel died that same afternoon, nearly at the same hour at which her husband, two days before, had been called away. Some people may say that she died of a broken heart; some that there is no such thing as death from a broken heart. Let us merely record her death. Such deaths from trial, sudden, sharp, and unexpected, do occur. What matters it to dispute whether it be ascribed to a romance? Say the truth.

Ethel died from the shock of her husband's decease. She died, and let us be thankful that to her idolatry also was sent a merciful check and chastisement.

Uppershot Common, which knew so well the tread of that light foot, knew also the heavy tread of mourners which traversed it to her grave. The grass in Holycross churchyard, which welcomed the drops of dew from a kindly heaven sent down at dawn, bowed beneath the bitter tears that fell upon it at noon at the obsequies of Ethel and Edgar, and from whom? from those who loved them both and mourned their swift departure.



CHAPTER XXVI.

IMMORTELLES.

LITTLE remains for the chronicler to tell: only the word which heads this chapter. Immortelles! the wreaths that pious relations hang over the graves of those who have gone before them to their long homes! They used to be seldom, if ever, seen in England, but now happily, are beginning to be adopted. On the Continent, they are seen in all cemeteries, whether the graves are for those of the Lutheran, Calvinist, or Roman-Catholic denomination. Here in our country, at least in most parts, they frighten our consciences, or, I should say, the phantoms of our consciences, and that because they are supposed to savour of Rome! Bitter reproach to mourning hearts! We cannot use those little things which betoken what remains of good in our sinful nature, without giving offence and causing a reproach to others, who *will* not see that a lesson can be conveyed by a little thing as well as it can by a great one.

The Immortelle, properly speaking, is composed of ivy leaves, and the flower of the amaranth,¹ or everlasting, as its vulgar denomination is. In some places heath is introduced, but, being apt to turn yellow early, requires soon renewing, and should,

¹ *Amaranthus flos, symbolum est immortalitatis.*—Clem. Alexandr. So 1 S. Pet. i. 4, "To an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that *fadeth not away, & upsurvives.*"

therefore, be avoided. As in different parishes varied colours have been used to denote different seasons and days in altar-cloths, altar-hangings, and lectern-covers, so formerly in weaving the Immortelle, different colours of the amaranth were substituted, according to the different age, circumstances, or causes of death in the deceased. In the early part of the sixteenth century, yellow was a common colour in use for mourning; we have ample authority for saying so, from the dress of the period. Whether the Immortelle (I use the French word, because it is commonly known by that name now-a-days) was in use in England generally at that date, I have not been satisfactorily able to determine; but it seems to have been so antecedently to that date, and there is no reason to suppose that it had suddenly been discontinued. Yellow, then,—the yellow everlasting, was the ordinary mourning for the wreath in all deaths; it is and was the hardiest, the least tending to fade, the one that most represented the colour of mourning. But violet has ever been a favourite colour in the Church of CHRIST, for representing sorrow, and there exists a¹ violet-coloured amaranth, which answers to one mentioned, I think, in Shakspeare. It is true that in the botanical dictionaries of Johnson, and others, this particular amaranth is mentioned as only known in England since the year 1820, or of a period not long antecedent to that date. But one circumstance connected with its history is very significant. Its name, in horticulture, is *Amaranthus caudatus*, but in brackets is given its common English name, "Love lies bleeding," which certainly in no way carries out the Latin signification. Another is,

¹ Pliny calls it purple. Lib. 21, c. 11.

See also Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Lib. III. 352 and seq.

"Immortal amaranth . . .
Impurpled with celestial roses smiled."

Amaranthus caudatus maximus (Tree love lies bleeding.) Can there be any doubt that this violet-coloured amaranth, or one resembling it, was known at an early period, and that it derives its *sobriquet* from old association?

So, however, thought Pansy, and so did the head gardener at Newlands—no fool in his way—when the latter formed and placed the “Immortelles” at Ethel’s grave. Love lies bleeding, indeed, or perchance the kindly soil which once knew the tread of the light footstep, has drunk up the blood with a greedy gratitude! But, as this tale has so often tried to show, the external is but a sign to represent a spiritual thought within. Are there no other Immortelles than those of amaranth and ivy which hang over the three graves at Holycross? A few. Reader, let them form the conclusion of this history, now already too much spun out.

Two persons stand at sunset before those graves, one a sad, respectable man, bloated in countenance, but with the remains of early intelligence: the other a short, erect, younger person, with good humour irresistibly peeping from every feature, though now those features are clouded by the feelings which the scene is calling up.

The first-mentioned of these is the Reverend Thompson Beaumont; the second, his former pupil and our former friend, George Turnbull.

“Of what did he die?” said the elder, in a low tone.

“Doolittle says, of disease in the heart,” replied George.

“Did he know of it, then?”

“It appears he did. Markham was taken ill the night on which the marriage was settled at the Hermitage.”

“But it was wrong in him, knowing that, not to

have mentioned it. It would have saved Miss Conway's life, at all events."

"He thinks not," said George. "Nothing could have stopped the match, and at that stage such an intimation would have made her more wild for it than before. Besides, he knew cases of the same complaint where the patient lived for thirty years. With this knowledge, he had clearly no right to interfere in their happiness."

"True," said Beaumont, "Would that Doolittle had always been as considerate in speaking of others. However, I have no right to complain. I came to Holycross to see the resting-place of him who had so worthily replaced an unworthy predecessor. It is the last time, George, boy. I resigned my living this morning: it is but a tribute due to Markham, whom I never saw, but whom I know now as well as those good saints whose lives are brought down to us by the Church's history. A tribute," he said, "and this one other too," as he shook a large tear-drop that had fallen on his hard, round hand on the cross over Edgar's grave.

That tear was from a contrite heart. The resignation of his living was from a sense of the most debased unworthiness.

Weave these two into the wreath of fresh Immortelle now hanging on that cross. They will last longer in angels' eyes than all the amaranth—everlasting though it be.

Three hours later—at dusk—two other figures alone stand on the same spot. They are those of Pansy and Angelica.

No conversation passes between them here. With stifled sobs they place their floral offerings on the graves, and hand in hand, after in vain looking at that sod through the tears that blind their vision, they leave the churchyard.

Those sobs—those sympathetic tears—are they not worthy to be wreathed among the everlastings? Will they not survive when the green, and the yellow, and the violet are dried up—when the bright July sun has scorched the flowers, will not these tears be always fresh?

Ah! no sun—no hot sirocco of prejudice will absorb them. They shine ever! perennial dew-drops on the everlasting green of angels' hearts.

Poor Lizzy Miller! One word must one say of her. Her heart's blood had been taken from her. She had been kindly treated all her days, and had been loved by many. But she had, nevertheless, known but one relation—Ethel, her sister! Others had respected, esteemed, cherished even, but Ethel alone had really made her an equal. On Ethel's breast had she laughed as a child—in the same cot had she slept. In Ethel's happiness was her own future bound up. Ethel, and Edgar, and she, "always together!" Was not this a rude separation for the pretty natural flower,—herself fit to form part of an Immortelle, for her who, but three days hence, had expected to welcome them to a home, of which she was also to form a most welcome part?

I have no time to tell much more, but of pretty Pansy I must mention the future. Aunt Georgy, true to her dying niece's wish, increased Pansy's fortune to the sum of £300 a year. Pansy at first persisted in living at Holycross. She could not leave the graves—she could not leave the schools, Edgar's pride, nor the organ, her own delight. But after a time came the new incumbent. He, no doubt honoured Markham's memory, just as we all in this world honour the memory of a good man, of whom we know nothing; but, unfortunate obliquity of mental vision! he could see nothing interesting in Miss Miller. "She was a most respectable

young person to all appearance," he said,—(of course, he had heard from kind tongues in Drelington who she was, and about her birth,)—"but the fact was, his wife wished to superintend the organ herself, and he had peculiar opinions as to the management of his own schools." So Pansy had to make herself scarce. She took a cottage at Callington, and for a year did good in that locality, at the end of which time she was shocked out of her propriety by an offer of the hand and heart of George Turnbull, who for many months had watched her mourning alternately on the steps of St. Ethel's Well, and at Ethel's grave. But Pansy had no heart to give: this guileless, simple little girl knew of no love for man. The bright spirits which had gone before were the trysting places of her young heart. She told George Turnbull that she was beneath him in station, that she never could make him happy,—in fine, that she did not love him, or care a pin about him; or indeed about any other man on earth.

This event induced her at last to consent to follow Mrs. Wreford's oft-repeated request, that she should come and live with them again at Newlands. She began to feel now that she must not live alone; that she might be of use in that family, which had made her a part of their kin, and which Ethel, when on earth, counted to be her nearest and dearest.

And so Pansy became part of Newlands; and she and Angelica made their joint visits to St. Ethel's well and Holycross churchyard.

But Pansy, "Immortelle" though she might be in the perennial tenderness of her heart, like other "Immortelles," lost the freshness of her pristine beauty. When I last saw her, only eighteen months after Ethel's death, not a shadow, not a vestige of her prettiness remained. The colour,

the softness, the fruity down upon her cheek, were all gone. "She was," she said, "fitting to be a nurse to Angelica's children, when they came, and to Angelica's children's children, perhaps!" The full loveliness of those lustrous eyes was there, but complexion, colour, even expression had faded, and the face had become but the mask of its former self.

George Turnbull did not receive the seed in vain. His mind, easily impressed when his affections had been roused, began seriously to reflect on the lessons which Markham's actions as well as his words taught. All his life he had been led to consider himself an ignoramus—with some good qualities, he knew, for he was an universal favourite—but an ignoramus he was (not exactly expressly so dubbed, but such by inference), and as such he believed himself destined to a no more brilliant part in life than to do his duty as a subordinate officer; to be good-natured and accommodating whenever opportunity called on him to exhibit these qualities; and to be shot the first in action, to make room for the more brilliant talents. Ethel's beauty and attractions had certainly, on his return home, made him feel that there might be something of a higher excellence worth striving for; but even here we know how he felt his inferiority, and how quickly he relinquished his efforts for the prize, when he felt it to be reserved of right for another. It was his affection and veneration for Markham, however, which first taught him that he was undervaluing himself. He had learnt now that no man has a common or a mean part to play. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." There is no one who may not be an apostle; no one who may not work good in others, and who will not work good, if he remember that others may like-

wise work good in him,—if he will keep continually in view that, while he is extracting the “mote from his brother’s eye,” he has “the beam” ready to be extracted from his own.

Then, again, Markham’s kindness and charity towards the most deluded of his flock struck George very much. There was never a wicked or profligate man or woman in the parish, be his or her conduct such as to call for his severest reprobation, that Markham, in speaking to George, had not some loving word or excuse for them.

Again, Markham would never allow that he of himself did good; and if George pointed out to him how such a lesson or such an action had had such and such an effect, Markham always replied that it was the “Church” that did this, and the “Church” only.

All these things produced a lively effect on George’s unsophisticated heart; and when Markham first made that attempt in Callington Lane to make him exert himself in CHRIST’S work, the idea began to steal upon him that he might do something higher than the commonplace career he had marked out as his own. This idea was strengthened by subsequent events, and by the course which his friend Major Dalton took. The streets and alleys of S. Bartholomew’s, Morlington, had, through these two, even more reason than ever to remember their old Curate.

Finally, the peace which had reigned over Europe for nearly forty years, seeming not likely to be disturbed, George sold out; and what with the sale of his commission, and a legacy from a great aunt, finding himself in some sort independent, he offered to Pansy. His failure in that quarter affected him somewhat at first; but the lessons of Markham were still fresh on his memory: and, buying a farm about thirty miles from Drellington, he set to work

in true earnest to make himself friends of that "mammon of unrighteousness," which, so dangerous in their mis-application, are, after all, in good hands, the keys to the portals of eternal light.

"By their fruits shall ye know them," we are told. Surely these fruits may fitly find a place in the chaplet of "immortelles" which adorn Edgar's cherished memory ; and a sweeter flower than any other shall yet beautify that garland, if this record of his one fault as a priest, in seeking to devote to a human being the worship which should have been all CHRIST's, if it have power to nerve some of his brother clergy to choose that high path of self-abnegation, which shall lead them at the last to walk with Him in white, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

One more "immortelle:" that which hangs round Eva's memory. That is not in Holycross : in Morlington we must look for this imperishable wreath.

Here, in the dark alleys of poverty, sickness, squalidness, vice, there is a memorial in the hearts of the poor. Was the external nothing to them, when they looked for the glad, compassionate smile—the pale, mournful, ever thoughtful mien? Oh, foolish friends ! the poor care not for money—in the crowded, over-peopled districts of our manufacturing cities they seldom expect it, will still less ask for it: but sympathy—a smile, a look, a tear, a shake of the hand, all externals, evidencing the heart within—they treasure in their inmost souls.

Herein, then, exists the immortelle, imperishable, everlasting evergreen that wreathes the memory of Eva.

In the church of S. Bartholomew (the saint without guile), at Morlington, is a window, put up to her memory by Colonel Wreford. The words beneath it run in this very simple fashion, without

date or further record—"In memory of Eva Markham"—and the poor humble children who see it Sunday after Sunday show it to their newly arrived companions with the words, "That was our teacher." And perhaps a bad girl in those wicked parts stops with a tear to tell, as she passes the sacred edifice, and points to it from outside, "That was the kind lady who came to see me, and whom, had I followed, I might now have been with in heaven."

"Immortelles, ever green!"

Amaranths ever purple, in the rich blood of beating hearts. Ye bloom alway on earth, and in the heavens too!



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